To Kenneth Bekkedahl
From Rev. G.H. Harrison
January 17, 1972

Geo. H. Harrison.
Portland, Ore.
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The Ideal Life

THE IDEAL LIFE

ADDRESSES HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED

BY

HENRY DRUMMOND

WITH MEMORIAL SKETCHES BY

IAN MACLAREN

AND

W. ROBERTSON NICOLL

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Introductory Note

THE addresses which make up this volume were written by Professor Drummond between the years 1876 and 1881, and are now published to meet the wishes of those who heard some of them delivered, and in the hope that they may continue his work.

They were never prepared for publication, and have been printed from his manuscripts with a few obvious verbal corrections. A few paragraphs used in later publications have been retained.

Of the memorial sketches, the first was originally published in the "Contemporary Review," the second in the "North American Review."

December, 1897.

Introduction

I

PROFESSOR DRUMMOND'S influence on his contemporaries is not to be measured by the sale of his books, great as that has been. It may be doubted whether any living novelist has had so many readers, and perhaps no living writer has been so eagerly followed and so keenly discussed on the Continent and in America. For some reason, which it is difficult to assign, many who exercise great influence at home are not appreciated elsewhere. It has been said, for example, that no book of Ruskin's has ever been translated into a Continental language, and though such a negative is obviously dangerous, it is true that Ruskin has not been to Europe what he has been to England. But Professor Drummond had the widest vogue from Norway to Germany. There was a time when scarcely a week passed in Germany without the publication of a book or pamphlet in which his views were canvassed. In Scandinavia, perhaps, no other living Englishman was so widely known. In every part of

America his books had an extraordinary circulation. This influence reached all classes. It was strong among scientific men, whatever may be said to the contrary. Among such men as Von Moltke, Mr. Arthur Balfour, and others belonging to the governing class, it was stronger still. It penetrated to every section of the Christian Church, and far beyond these limits. Still, when this is said, it remains true that his deepest influence was personal and hidden. In the long series of addresses he delivered all over the world he brought about what may at least be called a crisis in the lives of innumerable hearers. He received, I venture to say, more of the confidences of people untouched by the ordinary work of the Church than any other man of his time. Men and women came to him in their deepest and bitterest perplexities. To such he was accessible, and both by personal interviews and by correspondence, gave such help as he could. He was an ideal confessor. No story of failure daunted or surprised him. For every one he had a message of hope; and, while the warm friend of a chosen circle and acutely responsive to their kindness, he did not seem to lean upon his friends. He himself did not ask for sympathy, and did not seem to need it. The innermost secrets of his life were between himself and his Saviour. While frank and at times even communicative, he had nothing to say about himself or about those who had

trusted him. There are multitudes who owed to Henry Drummond all that one man can owe to another, and who felt such a thrill pass through them at the news of his death as they can never experience again.

Henry Drummond was born at Stirling in 1851. He was surrounded from the first by powerful religious influences of the evangelistic kind. His uncle, Mr. Peter Drummond, was the founder of what is known as the Stirling Tract enterprise, through which many millions of small religious publications have been circulated through the world. As a child he was remarkable for his sunny disposition and his sweet temper, while the religiousness of his nature made itself manifest at an early period. I do not gather, however, that there were many auguries of his future distinction. He was thought to be somewhat desultory and independent in his work. In due course he proceeded to the University of Edinburgh, where he distinguished himself in science, but in nothing else. He gained, I believe, the medal in the geology class. But like many students who do not go in for honours, he was anything but idle. He tells us himself that he began to form a library, his first purchase being a volume of extracts from Ruskin's works. Ruskin taught him to see the world as it is, and it soon became a new world to him, full of charm and loveliness. He learned to linger beside the ploughed

field, and revel in the affluence of colour and shade which were to be seen in the newly-turned furrows, and to gaze in wonder at the liquid amber of the two feet of air above the brown earth. Next to Ruskin he put Emerson, who all his life powerfully affected both his teaching and his style. Differing as they did in many ways, they were alike in being optimists with a high and noble conception of good, but with no correspondingly definite conception of evil. Mr. Henry James says that Emerson's genius had a singular thinness, an almost touching lightness, sparseness, and transparency about it. And the same was true, in a measure, of Drummond's. The religious writers who attracted him were Channing and F. W. Robertson. Channing taught him to believe in God, the good and gracious Sovereign of all things. From Robertson he learned that God is human, and that we may have fellowship with Him because He sympathises with us. It is well known that Robertson himself was a warm admirer of Channing. The parallels between Robertson and Channing in thought, and even in words, have never been properly drawn out. It would be a gross exaggeration to say that the contact with Robertson and Channing was the beginning of Drummond's religious life. But it was through them, and it was at that period of his studentship that he began to take possession for himself of Christian truth. And it was a great

secret of his power that he preached nothing except what had personally come home to him and had entered into his heart of hearts. His attitude to much of the theology in which he was taught was that not of denial, but of respectful distance. He might have come later on to appropriate it and preach it, but the appropriation would have been the condition of the preaching. His mind was always receptive. Like Emerson, he was an excellent listener. He stood always in a position of hopeful expectancy, and regarded each delivery of a personal view as a new fact to be estimated on its merits. I may add that he was a warm admirer of Mr. R. H. Hutton, and thought his essay on Goethe the best critical piece of the century. He used to say that, like Mr. Hutton, he could sympathise with every Church but the Hard Church.

After completing his University course he went to the New College, Edinburgh, to be trained for the ministry of the Free Church. The time was critical. The Free Church had been founded in a time of intense Evangelical faith and passion. It was a visible sign of the reaction against Moderatism. The Moderates had done great service to literature, but their sermons were favourably represented by the solemn fudge of Blair. James Macdonell, the brilliant *Times* leader-writer, who carefully observed from the position of an outsider the ecclesiastical life of his countrymen, said that the

Moderate leaders deliberately set themselves to the task of stripping Scotch Presbyterianism free from provincialism, and so triumphant were they that most of their sermons might have been preached in a heathen temple as fitly as in St. Giles. They taught the moral law with politeness; they made philosophy the handmaid of Christianity with well-bred moderation, and they so handled the grimmer tenets of Calvinism as to hurt no susceptibilities. The storm of the Disruption blew away the old Moderates from their place of power, and men like Chalmers, Cunningham, Candlish, Welsh, Guthrie, Begg, and the other leaders of the Evangelicals, more than filled their place. The obvious danger was that the Free Church should become the home of bigotry and obscurantism. This danger was not so great at first. There was a lull in critical and theological discussion, and men were sure of their ground. The large and generous spirit of Chalmers impressed itself on the Church of which he was the main founder, and the desire to assert the influence of religion in science and literature in all the field of knowledge was shown from the beginning. For example, the *North British Review* was the organ of the Free Church, and did not stand much behind the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly*, either in the ability of its articles or in the distinction of many of its contributors. But especially the Free Church showed its wisdom by founding theological sem-

inaries, and filling their chairs with its best men. A Professorship of Divinity was held to be a higher position than the pastorate of any pulpit. As time went on, however, and as the tenets of the Westminster Evangelicanism were more and more formidably assailed, the Free Church came in danger of surrendering its intellectual life. The whisper of heresy would have damaged a minister as effectually as a grave moral charge. Independent thought was impatiently and angrily suppressed. Macdonell said, writing in the *Spectator* in 1874, that the Free Church was being intellectually starved, and he pointed out that the Established Church was gaining ground under the leadership of such men as Principal Tulloch and Dr. Wallace, who in a sense represented the old Moderates, though they were as different from them as this age is from the last. The Free Church was apparently refusing to shape the dogmas of traditional Christianity in such a way as to meet the subtle intellectual and moral demands of an essentially scientific age. There was an apparent unanimity in the Free Church, but it was much more apparent than real. For one thing, the teaching of some of the professors had been producing its influence. Dr. A. B. Davidson, the recognised master of Old Testament learning in this country, a man who joins to his knowledge imagination, subtlety, fervour, and a rare power of style, had been quietly teaching the

best men amongst his students that the old views of revelation would have to be seriously altered. He did not do this so much directly as indirectly, and I think there was a period when any Free Church minister who asserted the existence of errors in the Bible would have been summarily deposed. The abler students had been taking sessions at Germany, and had thus escaped from the narrowness of the provincial coterie. They were interested, some of them in literature, some in science, some in philosophy. At the New College they discussed in their theological society with daring and freedom the problems of the time. A crisis was sure to come, and it might very well have been a crisis which would have broken the Church in pieces. That it did not was due largely to the influence of one man — the American Evangelist, Mr. Moody.

In 1873 Mr. Moody commenced his campaign in the Barclay Free Church, Edinburgh. A few days before, Drummond had read a paper to the Theological Society of his college on Spiritual Diagnosis, in which he maintained that preaching was not the most important thing, but that personal dealing with those in anxiety would yield better results. In other words, he thought that practical religion might be treated as an exact science. He had given himself to scientific study with a view of standing for the degree of Doctor of Science. Moody at once made a deep impression on Edinburgh, and attracted

the ablest students. He missed in this country a sufficient religious provision for young men, and he thought that young men could best be moulded by young men. With his keen American eye he perceived that Drummond was his best instrument, and he immediately associated him in the work. It had almost magical results. From the very first Drummond attracted and deeply moved crowds, and the issue was that for two years he gave himself to this work of evangelism in England, in Scotland, and in Ireland. During this period he came to know the life histories of young men in all classes. He made himself a great speaker; he knew how to seize the critical moment, and his modesty, his refinement, his gentle and generous nature, his manliness, and above all, his profound conviction, won for him disciples in every place he visited. His companions were equally busy in their own lines, and in this way the Free Church was saved. A development on the lines of Tulloch and Wallace was impossible for the Free Church. Any change that might take place must conserve the vigorous evangelical life of which it had been the home. The change did take place. Robertson Smith, who was by far the first man of the circle, won, at the sacrifice of his own position, toleration for Biblical criticism, and proved that an advanced critic might be a convinced and fervent evangelical. Others did something, each in his own sphere, and it is

not too much to say that the effects have been world-wide. The recent writers of Scottish fiction — Barrie, Crockett, and Ian Maclaren — were all children of the Free Church, two of them being ministers. In almost every department of theological science, with perhaps the exception of Church history, Free Churchmen have made contributions which rank with the most important of the day. It is but bare justice to say that the younger generation of Free Churchmen have done their share in claiming that Christianity should rule in all the fields of culture, that the Incarnation hallows every department of human thought and activity. No doubt the claim has excited some hostility; at the same time the general public has rallied in overwhelming numbers to its support, and any book of real power written in a Christian spirit has now an audience compared with which that of most secular writers is small.

Even at that time Drummond's evangelism was not of the ordinary type. When he had completed his studies, after brief intervals of work elsewhere, he found his professional sphere as lecturer on Natural Science in the Free Church College at Glasgow. There he came under the spell of Dr. Marcus Dods, to whom, as he always testified, he owed more than to any other man. He worked in a mission connected with Dr. Dods' congregation, and there preached the remarkable series of addresses which were afterwards pub-

lished as "Natural Law in the Spiritual World." The book appeared in 1883, and the author would have been quite satisfied with a circulation of 1,000 copies. In England alone it has sold about 120,000 copies, while the American and foreign editions are beyond count. There is a natural prejudice against premature reconciliations between science and religion. Many would say with Schiller: "Feindschaft sei zwischen euch, noch kommt ein Bundniss zu frühe: Forschet-beide getrennt, so wird die Wahrheit erkannt." In order to reconcile science and religion finally you must be prepared to say what is science and what is religion. Till that is done any synthesis must be premature, and any book containing it must in due time be superseded. Drummond was not blind to this, and yet he saw that something had to be done. Evolution was becoming more than a theory — it was an atmosphere. Through the teaching of evolutionists a subtle change was passing over morals, politics, and religion. Compromises had been tried and failed. The division of territory desired by some was found to be impossible. Drummond did not begin with doctrine and work downwards to nature. He ran up natural law as far as it would go, and then the doctrine burst into view. It was contended by the lamented Aubrey Moore that the proper thing is to begin with doctrine. While Moore would have admitted that science cannot be defined,

that even the problem of evolution is one of which as yet we hardly know the outlines, he maintained that the first step was to begin with the theology of the Catholic Church, and that it was impossible to defend Christianity on the basis of anything less than the whole of the Church's creed. Drummond did not attempt this. He declined, for example, to consider the relation of evolution to the Fall and to the Pauline doctrine of redemption. What he maintained was that, if you begin at the natural laws, you end in the spiritual laws; and in a series of impressive illustrations he brought out his facts of science, some of them characteristic doctrines of Calvinism — brought them out sternly and undisguisedly. By many of the orthodox he was welcomed as a champion, but others could not acquiesce in his assumption of evolution, and regarded him as more dangerous than an open foe. The book was riddled with criticisms from every side. Drummond himself never replied to these, but he gave his approval to an anonymous defence which appeared in the *Expositor*,[1] and it is worth while recalling briefly the main points. (1) His critics rejected his main position, which was not that the spiritual laws are analogous to the natural laws, but that they are the same laws. To this he replied that if he had not shown identity, he had done nothing; but he admitted that the application of natural law to the spiritual

[1] Third Series, Vol. I.

world had decided and necessary limits, the principle not applying to those provinces of the spiritual world most remote from human experience. He adhered to the distinction between nature and grace, but he thought of grace also as forming part of the divine whole of nature, which is an emanation from the recesses of the divine wisdom, power and love. (2) His use of the law of biogenesis was severely attacked alike from the scientific and the religious side. Even Christian men of science thought he had laid dangerous stress on the principle *omne vivum ex vivo*, and declined to say that biogenesis was as certain as gravitation. They further affirmed, and surely with reason, that the principle is not essential to faith. From the religious side it was urged that he had grossly exaggerated the distinction between the spiritual man and the natural man, and that he ignored the susceptibilities or affinities of the natural man for spiritual influence. The reply was that he had asserted the capacity for God very strongly. "The chamber is not only ready to receive the new life, but the Guest is expected, and till He comes is missed. Till then the soul longs and yearns, wastes and pines, waving its tentacles piteously in the empty air, or feeling after God if so be that it may find Him." (3) As for the charge that he could not reconcile his own statements as to divine efficiency and human responsibility, it was pointed out that this was only a phase of the larger difficulty of

reconciling the exercise of the divine will with the freedom of the human will. What he maintained, in common with Augustinian and Puritan theology, was that in every case of regeneration there is an original intervention of God. (4) The absence of reference to the Atonement was due to the fact that the doctrine belonged to a region inaccessible to the new method, lying in the depths of the Divine Mind, and only to be made known by revelation. (5) The charge that he taught the annihilation of the unregenerate was repudiated. The unregenerate had not fulfilled the conditions of eternal life; but that does not show that they may not exist through eternity, for they exist at present, although in Mr. Drummond's sense they do not live. There is no doubt that many of the objections directed against his book applied equally to every form of what may be called evangelical Calvinism. But I think that the main impression produced on competent judges was that the volume, though written with brilliant clearness of thought and imagination, and full of the Christian spirit, did not give their true place to personality, freedom, and conscience, terms against which physical science may even be said to direct its whole artillery, so far as it tries to depersonalise man, but terms in which the very life of morality and religion is bound up. Perhaps Drummond himself came ultimately to take this view. In any case, Matthew Arnold's verdict will stand: "What is certain is that the author of

the book has a genuine love of religion and a genuine religious experience."

His lectureship in Glasgow was constituted into a professor's chair, and he occupied it for the rest of his life. His work gave him considerable freedom. During a few months of the year he lectured on geology and botany, giving also scattered discourses on biological problems and the study of evolution. He had two examinations in the year, the first, which he called the "stupidity" examination, to test the men's knowledge of common things, asking such questions as, "Why is grass green?" "Why is the sea salt?" "Why is the heaven blue?" "What is a leaf?" etc., etc. After this Socratic inquiry he began his teaching, and examined his students at the end. He taught in a class-room that was also a museum, always had specimens before him while lecturing, and introduced his students to the use of scientific instruments, besides taking them for geological excursions. In his time of leisure he travelled very widely. He paid three visits to America, and one to Australia. He also took the journey to Africa commemorated in his brilliant little book, "Tropical Africa," a work in which his insight, his power of selection, his keen observation, his fresh style, and his charming personality appear to the utmost advantage. It was praised on every side, though Mr. Stanley made a criticism to which Drummond gave an effective and good-humoured retort. During these journeys and on

other occasions at home he continued his work of evangelism. He addressed himself mainly to students, on whom he had a great influence, and for years went every week to Edinburgh for the purpose of delivering Sunday evening religious addresses to University men. He was invariably followed by crowds, the majority of whom were medical students. He also, on several occasions, delivered addresses in London to social and political leaders, the audience including many of the most eminent men of the time. The substance of these addresses appeared in his famous booklets, beginning with the "Greatest Thing in the World," and it may be worth while to say something of their teaching. Mr. Drummond did not begin in the conventional way. He seemed to do without all that, to common Christianity, is indispensable. He approached the subject so disinterestedly, with such an entire disregard of its one presupposition, sin, that many could never get on common ground with him. He entirely omitted that theology of the Cross which had been the substance hitherto of evangelistic addresses. Nobody could say that his gospel was "arterial" or "ensanguined." In the first place, he had, like Emerson, a profound belief in the powers of the human will. That word of Spinoza which has been called a text in the scriptures of humanity might have been his motto. "He who desires to assist other people . . . in common conversations will avoid referring to the vices of men, and will

take care only sparingly to speak of human impotence, while he will talk largely of human virtue or power, and of the way by which it may be made perfect, so that men being moved, not by fear or aversion, but by the effect of joy, may endeavour, as much as they can, to live under the rule of reason." With this sentence may be coupled its echo in the "Confessions of a Beautiful Soul": "It is so much the more our duty, not like the advocate of the evil spirit, always to keep our eyes fixed upon the nakedness and weakness of our nature, but rather to seek out all those perfections through which we can make good our claims to a likeness to God." But along with this went a passionate devotion to Jesus Christ. Emerson said, "The man has never lived who can feed us ever." Drummond maintained with absolute conviction that Christ could for ever and ever meet all the needs of the soul. In his criticism of "Ecce Homo," Mr. Gladstone answered the question whether the Christian preacher is ever justified in delivering less than a full Gospel. He argued that to go back to the very beginning of Christianity might be a method eminently suited to the needs of the present generation. The ship of Christianity was overloaded, not perhaps for fair weather, but when a gale came the mass strained over to the leeward. Drummond asked his hearers to go straight into the presence of Christ, not as He now presents Himself to us, bearing in His hand the long roll

of His conquests, but as He offered Himself to the Jew by the Sea of Galilee, or in the synagogue of Capernaum, or in the temple of Jerusalem. He declined to take every detail of the Christianity in possession as part of the whole. He denied that the rejection of the non-essential involved parting with the essential, and he strove to go straight to the fountain-head itself. Whatever criticisms may be passed it will be allowed that few men in the century have done so much to bring their hearers and readers to the feet of Jesus Christ. It has been said of Carlyle that the one living ember of the old Puritanism that still burned vividly in his mind was the belief that honest and true men might find power in God to alter things for the better. Drummond believed with his whole heart that men might find power in Christ to change their lives.

He had seven or eight months of the year at his disposal, and spent very little of them in his beautiful home at Glasgow. He wandered all over the world, and in genial human intercourse made his way to the hearts of rich and poor. He was as much at home in addressing a meeting of working men as in speaking at Grosvenor House. He had fastidious tastes, was always faultlessly dressed, and could appreciate the surroundings of civilisation. But he could at a moment's notice throw them all off and be perfectly happy. As a traveller in Africa he cheerfully endured much privation. He excelled in

many sports and was a good shot. In some ways he was like Lavengro, and I will say that some parts of "Lavengro" would be unintelligible to me unless I had known Drummond. Although he refused to quarrel, and had a thoroughly loyal and deeply affectionate nature, he was yet independent of others. He never married. He never undertook any work to which he did not feel himself called. Although he had the most tempting offers from editors, nothing would induce him to write unless the subject attracted him, and even then he was unwilling. Although he had great facility he never presumed upon it. He wrote brightly and swiftly, and would have made an excellent journalist. But everything he published was elaborated with the most scrupulous care. I have never seen manuscripts so carefully revised as his. All he did was apparently done with ease, but there was immense labour behind it. Although in orders he neither used the title nor the dress that go with them, but preferred to regard himself as a layman. He had a deep sense of the value of the Church and its work, but I think was not himself connected with any Church, and never attended public worship unless he thought the preacher had some message for him. He seemed to be invariably in good spirits, and invariably disengaged. He was always ready for any and every office of friendship. It should be said that, though few men were more criticised or misconceived, he

himself never wrote an unkind word about any one, never retaliated, never bore malice, and could do full justice to the abilities and character of his opponents. I have just heard that he exerted himself privately to secure an important appointment for one of his most trenchant critics, and was successful.

For years he had been working quietly at his last and greatest book, "The Ascent of Man." The chapters were first delivered as the Lowell Lectures in Boston, where they attracted great crowds. The volume was published in 1894, and though its sale was large, exceeding 20,000 copies, it did not command his old public. This was due very much to the obstinacy with which he persisted in selling it at a net price, a proceeding which offended the booksellers, who had hoped to profit much from its sale. The work is much the most important he has left us. It was an endeavour, as has been said, to engraft an evolutionary sociology and ethic upon a biological basis. The fundamental doctrine of the struggle of life leads to an individualistic system in which the moral side of nature has no place. Professor Drummond contended that the currently accepted theory, being based on an exclusive study of the conditions of nutrition, took account of only half the truth. With nutrition he associated, as a second factor, the function of reproduction, the struggle for the life of others, and maintained that this was of co-ordinate rank

as a force in cosmic evolution. Though others had recognised altruism as modifying the operation of egoism, Mr. Drummond did more. He tried to indicate the place of altruism as the outcome of those processes whereby the species is multiplied, and its bearing on the evolution of ethics. He desired, in other words, a unification of concept, the filling up of great gulfs that had seemed to be fixed. "If nature be the garment of God, it is woven without seam throughout; if a revelation of God, it is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; if the expression of His will, there is in it no variableness nor shadow of turning." After sketching the stages of the process of evolution, physical and ethical, he develops his central idea in the chapter on the struggle for the life of others, and then deals with the higher stages of the development of altruism as a modifying factor. The book was mercilessly criticised, but I believe that no one has attempted to deny the accuracy and the beauty of his scientific descriptions. Further, not a few eminent scientific men, like Professor Gairdner and Professor Macalister, have seen in it at least the germ out of which much may come. One of its severest critics, Dr. Dallinger, considers that nature is non-moral, and that religion begins with Christ. No man hath seen God at any time — this is what nature certifies. The only begotten Son of the Father, He hath declared Him — this is the message of Christianity. But there are many religious minds, and

some scientific minds, convinced, in spite of all the difficulties, that natural law must be moral, and very loth to admit a hopeless dualism between the physical and the moral order of the world. They say that the whole force of evolution directs our glance forward, and that its motto is χρὴ τέλος ὁρᾶν.

With the publication of this book Drummond's career as a public teacher virtually ended. He who had never known an illness, who apparently had been exempted from care and sorrow, was prostrated by a painful and mysterious malady. One of his kind physicians, Dr. Freeland Barbour, informs me that Mr. Drummond suffered from a chronic affection of the bones. It maimed him greatly. He was laid on his back for more than a year, and had both arms crippled, so that reading was not a pleasure and writing almost impossible. For a long time he suffered acute pain. It was then that some who had greatly misconceived him came to a truer judgment of the man. Those who had often found the road rough had looked askance at Drummond as a spoiled child of fortune, ignorant of life's real meaning. But when he was struck down in his prime, at the very height of his happiness, when there was appointed for him, to use his own words, "a waste of storm and tumult before he reached the shore," it seemed as if his sufferings liberated and revealed the forces of his soul.

The spectacle of his long struggle with a mortal disease was something more than impressive. Those who saw him in his illness saw that, as the physical life flickered low, the spiritual energy grew. Always gentle and considerate, he became even more careful, more tender, more thoughtful, more unselfish. He never in any way complained. His doctors found it very difficult to get him to talk of his illness. It was strange and painful, but inspiring, to see his keenness, his mental elasticity, his universal interest. Dr. Barbour says: "I have never seen pain or weariness, or the being obliged to do nothing, more entirely overcome, treated, in fact, as if they were not. The end came suddenly from failure of the heart. Those with him received only a few hours' warning of his critical condition." It was not like death. He lay on his couch in the drawing-room, and passed away in his sleep, with the sun shining in and the birds singing at the open window. There was no sadness nor farewell. It recalled what he himself said of a friend's death — "putting by the well-worn tools without a sigh, and expecting elsewhere better work to do."

W. Robertson Nicoll.

II

HE had been in many places over the world and seen strange sights, and taken his share in various works, and, being the man he was, it came to pass of necessity that he had many friends. Some of them were street arabs, some were negroes, some were medicals, some were evangelists, some were scientists, some were theologians, some were nobles. Between each one and Drummond there was some affinity, and each could tell his own story about his friend. It will be interesting to hear what Professor Greenfield or Mr. Moody may have to say; but one man, with profound respect for such eminent persons, would prefer to have a study of Drummond by Moolu, his African retainer. Drummond believed in Moolu, not because he was "pious" — which he was not — but because "he did his duty and never told a lie." From the chief's point of view, Moolu had the final virtue of a clansman — he was loyal and faithful: his chief, for that expedition, had beyond most men the necessary endowment of a leader, a magnetic personality. It is understood that Drummond's life is to be written at large by a friend, in whose capable and wise

hands it will receive full justice; but in the meantime it may not be unbecoming that one should pay his tribute who has his own qualification for this work of love. It is not that he is able to appreciate to the full the man's wonderful genius, or accurately to estimate his contributions to scientific and religious thought — this will be done by more distinguished friends — but that he knew Drummond constantly and intimately from boyhood to his death. If one has known any friend at school and college, and in the greater affairs of life has lived with him, argued with him, prayed with him, had his sympathy in the supreme moments of joy and sorrow, has had every experience of friendship except one — it was not possible to quarrel with Drummond, although you might be the hottest-tempered Celt on the face of the earth — then he may not understand the value of his friend's work, but at any rate he understands his friend. As one who knew Henry Drummond at first hand, my desire is to tell what manner of man he was in all honesty and without eulogy. If any one be offended then, let him believe that I wrote what I have seen, and if any one be incredulous, then I can only say that he did not know Drummond.

His body was laid to rest a few weeks ago, on a wet and windy March day, in the most romantic of Scottish cemeteries, and the funeral, on its way from the home of his boyhood to the Castle Rock of Stirling, passed the King's Park. It was in

that park more than thirty years ago that I first saw Drummond, and on our first meeting he produced the same effect as he did all his after life. The sun was going down behind Ben Lomond, in the happy summer time, touching with gold the gray old castle, deepening the green upon the belt of trees which fringed the eastern side of the park, and filling the park itself with soft, mellow light. A cricket match between two schools had been going on all day and was coming to an end, and I had gone out to see the result — being a new arrival in Stirling, and full of curiosity. The two lads at the wickets were in striking contrast — one heavy, stockish, and determined, who slogged powerfully and had scored well for his side; the other nimble, alert, graceful, who had a pretty but uncertain play. The slogger was forcing the running in order to make up a heavy leeway, and compelled his partner to run once too often. "It's all right, and you fellows are not to cry shame" — this was what he said as he joined his friends — "Buchanan is playing A1, and that hit ought to have been a four; I messed the running." It was good form, of course, and what any decent lad would want to say, but there was an accent of gaiety and a certain air which was very taking. Against that group of clumsy, unformed, awkward Scots lads this bright, straight, living figure stood in relief, and as he moved about the field my eyes followed him, and in my boyish and dull mind I had a sense that he was a type by himself, a visitor

of finer breed than those among whom he moved. By-and-by he mounted a friend's pony and galloped along the race-course in the park till one only saw a speck of white in the sunlight, and still I watched in wonder and fascination — only a boy of thirteen or so, and dull — till he came back, in time to cheer the slogger who had pulled off the match — with three runs to spare — and carried his bat.

"Well played, old chap!" the pure, clear, joyous note rang out on the evening air; "finest thing you 've ever done," while the strong-armed, heavy-faced slogger stood still and looked at him in admiration, and made amends. "I say, Drummond, it was my blame you were run out. . . ." Drummond was his name, and some one said "Henry." So I first saw my friend.

What impressed me that pleasant evening in the days of long ago I can now identify. It was the lad's distinction, an inherent quality of appearance and manner of character and soul which marked him and made him solitary. What happened with one strange lad that evening befell all kinds of people who met Drummond in later years. They were at once arrested, interested, fascinated by the very sight of the man, and could not take their eyes off him. Like a picture of the first order among ordinary portraits he unconsciously put his neighbours at a disadvantage. One did not realise how commonplace and colourless other men were till they stood side

by side with Drummond. Upon a platform of evangelists, or sitting among divinity students in a dingy classroom, or cabined in the wooden respectability of an ecclesiastical court, or standing in a crowd of passengers at a railway station, he suggested golden embroidery upon hodden gray. It was as if the prince of one's imagination had dropped in among common folk. He reduced us all to the peasantry.

Drummond was a handsome man, such as you could not match in ten days' journey, with delicately cut features, rich auburn hair, and a certain carriage of nobility, but the distinctive and commanding feature of his face was his eye. No photograph could do it justice, and very often photographs have done it injustice, by giving the idea of staringness. His eye was not bold or fierce; it was tender and merciful. But it had a power and hold which were little else than irresistible and almost supernatural. When you talked with Drummond, he did not look at you and out of the window alternately, as is the usual manner; he never moved his eyes, and gradually their penetrating gaze seemed to reach and encompass your soul. It was as Plato imagined it would be in the judgment; one soul was in contact with another — nothing between. No man could be double, or base, or mean, or impure before that eye. His influence, more than that of any man I have ever met, was mesmeric — which means that while other men affect their fellows

by speech and example, he seized one directly by his living personality. As a matter of fact, he had given much attention to the occult arts, and was at one time a very successful mesmerist. It will still be remembered by some college companions how he had one student so entirely under his power that the man would obey him on the street and surrender his watch without hesitation, and it was told how Drummond laid a useful injunction on a boy in a house where he was staying, and the boy obeyed it so persistently afterwards that Drummond had to write and set him free. Quite sensible and unromantic people grew uneasy in his presence, and roused themselves to resistance — as one might do who recognised a magician and feared his spell.

One sometimes imagines life as a kind of gas of which our bodies are the vessels, and it is evident that a few are much more richly charged than their fellows. Most people simply exist completing their tale of work — not a grain over; doing their measured mile — not an inch beyond; thinking along the beaten track — never tempted to excursions. Here and there in the world you come across a person in whom life is exuberant and overflowing, a force which cannot be tamed or quenched. Drummond was such an one, the most vital man I ever saw, who never loitered, never wearied, never was conventional, pedantic, formal, who simply revelled in the fulness of life. He was so radiant with life that ordinary people

showed pallid beside him, and shrank from him or were attracted and received virtue out of him. Like one coming in from the light and open air into a stuffy room where a company had been sitting with closed windows, Drummond burst into bloodless and unhealthy coteries, bringing with him the very breath of heaven.

He was the Evangelist to thoughtful men — over women he had far less power — and his strength lay in his personality. Without anecdotes or jokes, or sensationalism or doctrine, without eloquence or passion, he moved young men at his will because his message was life, and he was its illustration. His words fell one by one with an indescribable awe and solemnity, in the style of the Gospels, and reached the secret place of the soul. Nothing more unlike the ordinary evangelistic address could be imagined: it was so sane, so persuasive, so mystical, so final. It almost followed, therefore, that he was not the ideal of a popular evangelist who has to address the multitude, and produce his effect on those who do not think. For his work, it is necessary — besides earnestness, which is taken for granted — to have a loud voice, a broad humour, a stout body, a flow of racy anecdote, an easy negligence of connection, a spice of contempt for culture, and pledges of identification with the street in dress and accent. His hearers feel that such a man is homely and is one of themselves, and, amid laughter and tears of sim-

ple human emotion, they are moved by his speech to higher things. This kind of audience might regard Drummond with respectful admiration, but he was too fine a gentleman, they would consider, for their homespun. Place him, as he used to stand and speak, most perfectly dressed both as to body and soul, before five hundred men of good taste and fine sensibilities, or the same number of young men not yet cultured but full of intellectual ambitions and fresh enthusiasm, and no man could state the case for Christ and the soul after a more spiritual and winsome fashion. Religion is without doubt the better for the popular evangelist, although there be times when quiet folk think that he needs chastening; religion also requires in every generation one representative at least of the higher evangelism, and if any one should ask what manner of man he ought to be, the answer is to his hand — Henry Drummond.

When one admits, without reserve, that his friend was not made by nature to be a successful officer of the Salvation Army, it must not be understood that Drummond was in any sense a superior person, or that he sniffed in his daintiness at ordinary humanity — a spiritual Matthew Arnold. It would strain my conscience to bear witness that working people, say, however much they loved him, were perfectly at home with him, and it is my conviction, from observation of life, that this is an inevitable disability of distinction.

One may be so well dressed, so good looking, so well mannered, so spiritually refined, that men with soiled clothes and women cleaning the house may realise their low estate, and miss that free-masonry which at once by a hundred signs unites them in five minutes with a plainer man. While this may have been true, the blame was not his, and no man lived who had a more unaffected interest and keener joy in human life in the home or on the street. No power could drag him past a Punch-and-Judy show — the ancient, perennial, ever-delightful theatre of the people — in which, each time of attendance, he detected new points of interest. He would, in early days, if you please, gaze steadfastly into a window, in the High Street of Edinburgh, till a little crowd of men, women, children, and workmen, loafers, soldiers, had collected, and join with much zest in the excited speculations regarding the man — unanimously and suddenly imagined to have been carried in helpless — how he met with his accident, where he was hurt, and whether he would recover, listening eagerly to the explanation of the gathering given by some officious person to the policeman, and joining heartily in the reproaches levelled at some unknown deceiver. One of his chosen subjects of investigation, which he pursued with the zeal and patience of a naturalist, was that ever-interesting species — the Boy, whom he studied in his various forms and haunts: at home for the holidays, on the cricket

field, playing marbles on the street with a chance acquaintance while two families wait for their food, or living with many resources and high enjoyment in a barrel. There was nothing in a boy he did not know, could not explain, did not sympathise with, and so long as it lasts his name will be associated with the Boys' Brigade. While any other would only have seen two revellers in a man and woman singing their devious way along the street at night, Drummond detected that a wife, who had not been drinking, was luring her husband home by falling in with his mood, and that before it was reached she might need a friendly hand. His sense of humour was unerring, swift and masterful. If he came upon a good thing in his reading he would walk a mile to share it with a friend, and afterwards depart in the strength thereof, and he has been found in his room exhausted with delight with nothing before him but one of those Parisian plaster caricatures of a vagabond. Lying on his back in the pitiable helplessness and constant pain of those last two years, he was still the same man.

"Don't touch me, please; I can't shake hands, but I've saved up a first-rate story for you," and his palate was too delicate to pass anything second-rate. Partly this was his human joyousness, to whom the absurdities of life were ever dear; partly it was his bravery, who knew that the sight of him brought so low might be too much for a friend. His patience and sweetness

continued to the end, and he died as one who had tasted the joy of living and was satisfied.

His nature had, at the same time, a curious aloofness and separateness from human life, which one felt, but can hardly describe. He could be severe in speaking about a mean act or one who had done wickedly, but in my recollection he was never angry, and it was impossible to imagine him in a towering passion. He was profoundly interested in several causes, but there was not in him the making of a fanatical or headlong supporter. None could be more loyal in the private offices of friendship, but he would not have flung himself into his friend's public quarrel. In no circumstances would he be carried off his feet by emotion or be consumed by a white heat of enthusiasm. He was ever calm, cool, self-possessed master of himself, passionless in thought, in speech, in action, in soul. Were you in trouble he had helped you to his last resource, and concealed, if possible, his service; but of you, in his sore straits, he would have neither asked nor wished for aid. Many confidences he must have received; he gave none; many people must have been succoured by him; none succoured him till his last illness. Towards women, who are the test and revelation of men, he was ever chivalrous, but he left the impression on your mind that neither they nor their company — there may have been exceptions — attracted or satisfied him. He was too courteous a gentleman to give any

sign, but one guessed that a woman's departure from the room meant to him no loss, and was rather a relief. One was certain that he was loved; one was quite certain that he would never marry. So sexless was he towards women, so neutral towards men, so void of the elemental passions, which go to make the colour and tragedy of life, yet so noble and true was he, that one regarded him at times with awe, and for a moment thought of him as a being of another race, mingling with our life in all kindliness, yet maintaining and guarding his other world integrity.

This is at least perfectly certain that from his youth he refused to have his life arranged for him, but jealously and fearlessly directed it by his own instincts, refusing the brown, beaten paths wherein each man, according to his profession, was content to walk, and starting across the moor on his own way. Nothing can be more conventional than the career of the average Presbyterian minister who comes from a respectable religious family, and has the pulpit held up before him as the ambition of a good Scots lad; who is held in the way thereto by various traditional and prudential considerations, and better still — as is the case with most honest lads — by his mother's wishes; who works his laborious, enduring way through the Divinity Hall, and is yearly examined by the local Presbytery; who at last emerges into the butterfly life of a Proba-

tioner, and is freely mentioned, to his mother's anxious delight, in connection with "vacancies"; who is at last chosen by a majority to a pastorate — his mother being amazed at the blindness of the minority — and settles down to the routine of the ministry in some Scotch parish with the hope of Glasgow before him as a land of promise. His only variations in the harmless years might be an outburst on the historical reality of the Book of Jonah — ah me! Did that stout, middle-aged gentleman ever hint that Jonah was a drama? — which would be much talked of in the common room, and, it was whispered, reached the Professor's ears; and afterwards he might propose a revolutionary motion on the distribution of the Sustentation Fund. Add a handbook for Bible-classes on the Prophecy of Malachi, and you have summed up the adventures of his life. This was the life before Drummond when he entered the University of Edinburgh in 1866, and it ought to be recorded that he died an ordained minister and Professor of the Kirk, so that he did not disappoint his home, not become an ecclesiastical prodigal — but with what amazing variations did he invest the years between! What order he took his classes in no one knew, but he found his feet in natural philosophy and made a name in geology. His course at the New College he completed in three years and one year, with two years' evangelistic touring between; and he once electrified the students by a paper — it

seems yesterday, and I know where he stood — which owed much to Holmes and Emerson, but revealed his characteristic spiritual genius. His vacations he spent sometimes in tutorships, which yielded wonderful adventures, or at Tübingen, where his name was long remembered. As soon as Moody came to Edinburgh, Drummond allied himself with the most capable, honest, and unselfish evangelist of our day, and saw strange chapters in religious life through the United Kingdom. This was the infirmary in which he learned spiritual diagnosis. For one summer he was chaplain at Malta; in another he explored the Rockies; he lived five months among the Tanganyika forests, where he sent me a letter dated Central Africa, and mentioning, among other details, that he had nothing on but a helmet and three mosquitoes. He was for a time assistant in an Edinburgh church, and readers of the illustrated papers used to recognise him in the viceregal group at Dublin Castle. His people at home — one could trace some of his genius and much of his goodness to his father and mother — grew anxious and perplexed; for this was a meteoric course for a Free Kirk minister, and stolid acquaintances — the delicious absurdity of it — remonstrated with him as one who was allowing the chances of life to pass him, and urged him to settle. His friends had already concluded that he must be left free to fulfil himself, but knew not what to expect, when he suddenly appeared as a

lecturer on Natural Science in the Free Church College of Glasgow, and promptly annexed a working-men's church. Afterwards his lectureship became a chair, and he held it to the end, although threatened with charges of heresy and such like absurdities. You might as well have beaten a spirit with a stick as prosecuted Drummond for heresy. The chair itself was a standing absurdity, being founded in popular idea to beat back evolution and to reconcile religion and science; but it gave Drummond an opportunity of widening the horizon of the future ministry and infusing sweetness into the students' minds. He may have worn a white tie on Sunday duty at his church, but memory fails to recall this spectacle, and he consistently refused to be called Reverend — declaring (this was his fun) that he had no recollection of being ordained, and that he would never dare to baptise a child. The last time he preached was about 1882, in my own church, and the outside world did not know that he was a clergyman. From first to last he was guided by an inner light which never led him astray, and in the afterglow his whole life is a simple and perfect harmony.

Were one asked to select Drummond's finest achievement, he might safely mention the cleansing of student life at Edinburgh University. When he was an arts student, life in all the faculties, but especially the medical, was reckless, coarse, boisterous, and no one was doing anything

to raise its tone. The only visible sign of religion in my remembrance was a prayer meeting attended by a dozen men — one of whom was a canting rascal — and countenance from a professor would have given a shock to the university. Twenty years afterwards six hundred men, largely medicals, met every Sunday evening for worship and conference under Drummond's presidency, and every evening the meeting was addressed by tutors and fellows and other dignitaries. There was a new breath in academic life — men were now reverent, earnest, clean living and clean thinking, and the reformer who wrought this change was Drummond. This land, and for that matter the United States, has hardly a town where men are not doing good work for God and man to-day who have owed their lives to the Evangel and influence of Henry Drummond.

When one saw the unique and priceless work which he did, it was inexplicable and very provoking that the religious world should have cast this man, of all others, out, and have lifted up its voice against him. Had religion so many men of beautiful and winning life, so many thinkers of wide range and genuine culture, so many speakers who can move young men by hundreds towards the Kingdom of God, that she could afford or have the heart to withdraw her confidence from Drummond? Was there ever such madness and irony before Heaven as good people lifting up their testimony and writing articles

against this most gracious disciple of the Master, because they did not agree with him about certain things he said, or some theory he did not teach, while the world lay round them in unbelief and selfishness, and sorrow and pain? "What can be done," an eminent evangelist once did me the honour to ask, "to heal the breach between the religious world and Drummond?" And I dared to reply that in my poor judgment the first step ought to be for the religious world to repent of its sins, and make amends to Drummond for its bitterness. The evangelist indicated that, so far as he knew his world, it was very unlikely to do any such becoming deed, and I did not myself remember any instance of repentance on the part of the Pharisees. Then, growing bold, I ventured to ask why the good man had not summoned Drummond to his side, as he was working in a university town, and knew better than any other person that he could not find anywhere an assistant so acceptable or skilful. He agreed in that, but declared at once that if Drummond came his present staff would leave, and that two men could not do all the work, which seemed reasonable, and, besides, every man knows his own business best, and that evangelist knew his remarkably well. Nothing more remained to be said, and I rose to leave. At the far end of the room some of the staff were talking together. "I gave them a 'straight talk' at the men's meeting last night, and then we had such a sweet little

'sing,' and thirty souls dropped in." A young man of the better class was speaking, and I looked at the weak, self-satisfied face, but it is not necessary to write down my reflections as I left the place. Never did my friend say one unkind word of the world which condemned him, but it may be allowed to another to say that if any one wishes to indict the professional religionists of our time for bigotry and stupidity, painful and unanswerable proof lies ready to his hand in the fact that the finest evangelist of the day was treated as a Samaritan.

One, of course, remembers that Drummond's critics had their reasons, and those reasons cast interesting light on his theological standpoint. For one thing, unlike most evangelists, it was perfectly alien to this man to insist on repentance, simply because he had not the painful and overmastering sense of sin which afflicts most religious minds, and gives a strenuous turn to all their thinking. Each thinker conceives religion according to his cast of mind and trend of experience, and Christianity to Drummond was not so much a way of escape from the grip of sin, with its burden of guilt and loathsome contact, as a way of ethical and spiritual attainment. The question he was ever answering in his writing and speaking was not how can a man save his soul, but how can a man save his life. His idea of salvation was rising to the stature of Christ and sharing His simple, lowly, peaceful life. This

was the text of his brochures on religion, which charmed the world from "The Greatest Thing in the World" to "The City Without a Church." It is said even they gave offence to some ultra-theological minds — although one would fain have believed that such persuasive pleas have won all hearts — and I have some faint remembrance, perhaps a nightmare, that people published replies to the eulogy of Love. It was quite beside the mark to find fault with the theology in the little books, because there was none and could be none, since there was none in the author. Just as there are periods in the development of Christianity, there are men in every age corresponding to each of the periods — modern, Reformation, and Mediæval minds — and what charmed many in Drummond was this, that he belonged by nature to the pre-theological age. He was in his habit and thought a Christian of the Gospels, rather than of the Epistles, and preferred to walk with Jesus in Galilee rather than argue with Judaisers and Gnostics. It would be a gross injustice to say that he was anti-theological: it would be correct to say that he was non-theological. Jesus was not to him an official Redeemer discharging certain obligations: He was his unseen Friend with whom he walked in life, by Whose fellowship he was changed, to Whom he prayed. The effort of life should be to do the Will of God, the strength of life was Peace, the reward of life was to be like Jesus. Perfect Christianity was to be

as St. John was with Jesus. It was the Idyll of Religion.

Perhaps his two famous books, "Natural Law in the Spiritual World," and "The Ascent of Man," ought to be judged as larger Idylls. A writer often fails when he has counted himself strong, and succeeds in that which he has himself belittled. It was at one time Drummond's opinion that he had made a discovery in that fascinating debatable land between nature and religion, and that he was able to prove that the laws which govern the growth of a plant are the same in essence as those which regulate the culture of a soul. It appeared to some of us that the same laws could not and did not run through both provinces, but that on the frontier of the spiritual world other laws came into operation, and that "Natural Law" set forth with much grace and ingenuity a number of instructive analogies, and sometimes only suggestive illustrations. Had Drummond believed this was its furthest scope, he would never have published the book, and it was an open secret that in later years he lost all interest in "Natural Law." My own idea is that he had abandoned its main contention and much of its teaching, and would have been quite willing to see it withdrawn from the public. While that book was an attempt to identify the laws of two worlds which, under one suzerain, are really each autonomous, the "Ascent of Man" was a most successful

effort to prove that the spirit of Religion, which is altruism, pervades the processes of nature. It is the Poem of Evolution, and is from beginning to end a fascinating combination of scientific detail and spiritual imagination. Both books, but especially the Ascent, were severely criticised from opposite quarters, by theologians because the theology was not sound, by men of science because the science was loose, and Drummond had the misfortune of being a heretic in two provinces. But he had his reward in the gratitude of thousands neither dogmatic nor partisan, to whom he has given a new vision of the beauty of life and the graciousness of law.

His books will do good for years, as they have done in the past, and his tract on Charity will long be read, but the man was greater than all his writings. While he was competent in science, in religion he was a master, and if in this sphere he failed anywhere in his thinking, it was in his treatment of sin. This was the defect of his qualities, for of him, more than of any man known to me, it could be affirmed he did not know sin. As Fra Angelico could paint the Holy Angels because he had seen them, but made poor work of the devils because to him they were strange creatures, so this man could make holiness so lovely that all men wished to be Christians; but his hand lost its cunning at the mention of sin, for he had never played the fool. From his youth up he had kept the command-

ments, and was such a man as the Master would have loved. One takes for granted that each man has his besetting sin, and we could name that of our friends, but Drummond was an exception to this rule. After a lifetime's intimacy I do not remember my friend's failing. Without pride, without envy, without selfishness, without vanity, moved only by goodwill and spiritual ambitions, responsive ever to the touch of God and every noble impulse, faithful, fearless, magnanimous, Henry Drummond was the most perfect Christian I have known or expect to see this side the grave.

JOHN WATSON.
(*Ian Maclaren.*)

The Ideal Life

NUMBER I

Ill-Temper

THE ELDER
BROTHER

"*He was angry, and would not go in.*" — LUKE xv. 28.

THOSE who have studied the paintings of Sir Noel Paton must have observed that part of their peculiar beauty lies, by a trick of Art, in their partial ugliness. There are flowers and birds, knights and ladies, gossamer-winged fairies and children of seraphic beauty; but in the corner of the canvas, or just at their feet, some uncouth and loathsome form — a toad, a lizard, a slimy snail — to lend, by contrast with its repulsiveness, a lovelier beauty to the rest. So in ancient sculpture the griffin and the dragon grin among the angel faces on the cathedral front, heightening the surrounding beauty by their deformity.

Many of the literary situations of the New Testament powerfully exhibit this species of contrast. The twelve disciples — one of them is a devil. Jesus upon the Cross, pure and regal — on either side a thief. And here, as conspicu-

ously, in this fifteenth chapter of Luke, the most exquisite painting in the Bible is touched off at the foot with the black thundercloud of the elder brother — perfect, as a mere dramatic situation.

But this conjunction, of course, is more than artistic. Apart from its reference to the Pharisees, the association of these two characters — the prodigal and his brother — side by side has a deep moral significance.

When we look into Sin, not in its theological aspects, but in its everyday clothes, we find that it divides itself into two kinds. We find that there are sins of the body and sins of the disposition. Or more narrowly, sins of the passions, including all forms of lust and selfishness, and sins of the temper. The prodigal is *the* instance in the New Testament of sins of passion; the elder brother, of sins of temper.

One would say, at a first glance, that it was the younger brother in this picture who was the thundercloud. It was he who had dimmed all the virtues, and covered himself and his home with shame. And men have always pointed to the runaway son in contrast with his domestic brother, as the type of all that is worst in human character. Possibly the estimate is wrong. Possibly the elder brother is the worse. We judge of sins, as we judge of most things, by their outward form. We arrange the vices of our neighbours according to a scale which society has tacitly adopted, placing the more gross and

public at the foot, the slightly less gross higher up, and then by some strange process the scale becomes obliterated. Finally it vanishes into space, leaving lengths of itself unexplored, its sins unnamed, unheeded, and unshunned. But we have no balance to weigh sins. Coarser and finer are but words of our own. The chances are, if anything, that the finer are the lower. The very fact that the world sees the coarser sins so well is against the belief that they are the worst. The subtle and unseen sin, that sin in the part of the nature most near to the spiritual, ought to be more degrading than any other. Yet for many of the finer forms of sin society has yet no brand. This sin of the elder brother is a mere trifle, only a little bit of temper, and scarcely worthy the recording.

Now what was this little bit of temper? For Christ saw fit to record it. The elder brother, hard-working, patient, dutiful — let him get full credit for his virtues — comes in from his long day's work in the fields. Every night for years he has plodded home like this, heavy-limbed but light-hearted, for he has done his duty and honest sweat is on his brow. But a man's sense of responsibility for his character ends too often with the day's work. And we always meet the temptation which is to expose us when we least expect it. To-night, as he nears the old homestead, he hears the noise of mirth and music. He makes out the strain of a dancing measure

— a novel sound, surely, for the dull farm. "Thy brother is come," the servant says, "and they have killed the fatted calf." His brother! Happy hour! how long they mourned for him! How glad the old man would be! How the family prayer has found him out at last and brought the erring boy to his parents' roof! But no — there is no joy on that face; it is the thundercloud. "Brother, indeed," he mutters; "the scapegrace! Killed the fatted calf, have they? More than they ever did for me. I can teach them what *I* think of their merry-making. And talk of the reward of virtue! Here have I been all these years unhonoured and ignored, and this young *roué* from the swine-troughs assembles the whole country-side to do him homage." "And he was angry, and would not go in."

"Oh, the baby!" one inclines to say at first; but it is more than this. It is the thundercloud, a thundercloud which has been brewing under all his virtues all his life. It is the thundercloud. The subtle fluids from a dozen sins have come together for once, and now they are scorching his soul. Jealousy, anger, pride, uncharity, cruelty, self-righteousness, sulkiness, touchiness, doggedness, all mixed up together into one — Ill Temper. This is a fair analysis. Jealousy, anger, pride, uncharity, cruelty, self-righteousness, sulkiness, touchiness, doggedness, — these are the staple ingredients of Ill Temper. And yet, men laugh over it. "Only temper," they

call it: a little hot-headedness, a momentary ruffling of the surface, a mere passing cloud. But the passing cloud is composed of drops, and the drops here betoken an ocean, foul and rancorous, seething somewhere within the life — an ocean made up of jealousy, anger, pride, uncharity, cruelty, self-righteousness, sulkiness, touchiness, doggedness, lashed into a raging storm.

This is why temper is significant. It is not in what it is that its significance lies, but in what it reveals. But for this it were not worth notice. It is the intermittent fever which tells of unintermittent disease; the occasional bubble escaping to the surface, betraying the rottenness underneath; a hastily prepared specimen of the hidden products of the soul, dropped involuntarily when you are off your guard. In one word, it is the lightning-form of a dozen hideous and unchristian sins.

One of the first things to startle us — leaving now mere definition — about sins of temper, is their strange *compatibility with high moral character*. The elder brother, without doubt, was a man of high principle. Years ago, when his father divided unto them his living, he had the chance to sow his wild oats if he liked. As the elder brother, there fell to him the larger portion. Now was his time to see the world, to enjoy life, and break with the monotony of home. Like a dutiful son, he chose his career. The old home

should be his world, the old people his society. He would be his father's right hand, and cheer and comfort his declining years. So to the servants he became a pattern of industry; to the neighbours an example of thrift and faithfulness; a model young man to all the country, and the more so by contrast with his vagabond brother. For association with lofty character is a painful circumstance of this deformity. And it suggests strange doubts as to the real virtue of much that is reckoned virtue and gets credit for the name. In reality we have no criterion for estimating at their true worth men who figure as models of all the virtues. Everything depends on motive. The virtues may be real or only apparent, even as the vices may be real though not apparent. Some men, for instance, are kept from going astray by mere cowardice. They have not character enough to lose their character. For it often requires a strong character to go wrong. It demands a certain originality and courage, a pocketing of pride of which all are not capable, before a man can make up his mind to fall out of step with Society and scatter his reputation to the winds. So it comes to pass that many very mean men retain their outward virtue. Conversely, among the prodigal sons of the world are often found characters of singular beauty. The prodigal, no doubt, was a better man to meet and spend an hour with than his immaculate brother. A wealth of tenderness and generosity, truly sweet

and noble dispositions, constantly surprise us in characters hopelessly under the ban of men. But it is an instance of misconception as to the nature of sin that with most men this counts for nothing; although in those whose defalcation is in the lower region it counts, and counts almost for everything. Many of those who sow to the flesh regard their form of sin as trifling compared with the inconsistent and unchristian graces of those who profess to sow to the spirit. Many a man, for example, who thinks nothing of getting drunk would scorn to do an ungenerous deed or speak a withering word. And, as already said, it is really a question whether he is not right. One man sins high up in his nature, the other low down; and the vinous spendthrift, on the whole, may be a better man than the acid Christian. "Verily, I say unto you," said Jesus to the priests, "the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you."

The fact, then, that there are these two distinct sets of sins, and that few of us indulge both, but most of us indulge the one or the other, explains compatibility of virtuous conduct with much unloveliness of disposition. Now it is this very association which makes sins of temper appear so harmless. There cannot be much wrong, we fancy, where there is so much general good. How often it is urged as an apology for garrulous people, that they are the soul of kindness if we only knew them better. And how often it is maintained, as a set-off against crossness and

pitiable explosions of small distempers, that those who exhibit them are, in their normal mood, above the average in demonstrative tenderness. And it is this which makes it so hard to cure. We excuse the partial failure of our characters on the ground of their general success. We can afford to be a little bad who are so good. A true logic would say we can *only* afford to be a little better. If the fly in the ointment is a very small fly, why have a very small fly? Temper is the vice of the virtuous. Christ's sermon on the "Elder brother" is evidently a sermon pointedly to the virtuous — not to make bad people good but to make good people perfect.

Passing now from the nature and relations of sins of this peculiar class, we come briefly to look at their effects. And these are of two kinds — the influence of temper on the intellect, and on the moral and religious nature.

With reference to the first, it has sometimes been taken for granted that a bad temper is a positive acquisition to the intellect. Its fieriness is supposed to communicate combustion to surrounding faculties, and to kindle the system into intense and vigorous life. "A man, when excessively jaded," says Darwin, "will sometimes invent imaginary offences, and put himself into a passion unconsciously, for the sake of re-invigorating himself." Now, of course, passion has its legitimate place in human nature, and when

really controlled, instead of controlling, becomes the most powerful stimulus to the intellectual faculties. Thus it is this to which Luther refers when he says, "I never work better than when I am inspired by anger. When I am angry, I can write, pray, and preach well; for then my whole temperament is quickened, my understanding sharpened, and all mundane vexations and temptations depart."

The point, however, at which temper interferes with the intellect is in all matters of judgment. A quick temper really incapacitates for sound judgment. Decisions are struck off at a white heat, without time to collect grounds or hear explanations. Then it takes a humbler spirit than most of us possess to reverse them when once they are made. We ourselves are prejudiced in their favour simply because we have made them, and subsequent courses must generally do homage to our first precipitancy. No doubt the elder brother secretly confessed himself a fool the moment after his back was turned on the door. But he had taken his stand; he had said, "I will not go in," and neither his father's entreaties nor his own sense of the growing absurdity of the situation — think of the man standing outside his own door — were able to shake him. Temptation betraying a man into an immature judgment, that quickly followed by an irrelevant action, and the whole having to be defended by subsequent conduct, after making

such a fuss about it — such is the natural history on the side of intellect of a sin of temper.

Amongst the scum left behind by such an action, apart from the consequences to the individual are results always disastrous to others. For this is another peculiarity of sins of temper, that their worst influence is upon others. It is generally, too, the weak who are the sufferers; for temper is the prerogative of superiors, and inferiors, down to the bottom of the scale, have not only to bear the brunt of the storm, but to sink their own judgment and spend their lives in ministering to what they know to be caprice. So their whole training is systematically false, and their own mental habits become disorganised and ruined. When the young, again, are disciplined by the iron instead of on the golden rule, the consequences are still more fatal. They feel that they do not get a fair hearing. Their case is summarily dismissed untried; and that sort of nursery lynch law to which they are constantly subjected carries with it no explanation of moral principles, muzzles legitimate feelings, and really inflicts a punishment infinitely more serious than is intended, in crushing out all sense of justice.

But it is in their moral and social effects that the chief evil lies. It is astonishing how large a part of Christ's precepts is devoted solely to the inculcation of happiness. How much of His life, too, was spent simply in making people

happy! There was no word more often on His lips than "blessed," and it is recognised by Him as a distinct end in life, *the* end for this life, to secure the happiness of others. This simple grace, too, needs little equipment. Christ had little. One need scarcely even be happy one's self. Holiness, of course, is a greater word, but we cannot produce that in others. That is reserved for God Himself, but what is put in our power is happiness, and for that each man is his brother's keeper. Now society is an arrangement for producing and sustaining human happiness, and temper is an agent for thwarting and destroying it. Look at the parable for a moment, and see how the elder brother's wretched pettishness, explosion of temper, churlishness, spoiled the happiness of a whole circle. First, it certainly spoiled his own. How ashamed of himself he must have been when the fit was over, one can well guess. Yet these things are never so quickly over as they seem. Self-disgust and humiliation may come at once, but a good deal else within has to wait till the spirit is tuned again. For instance, prayer must wait. A man cannot pray till the sourness is out of his soul. He must first forgive his brother who trespassed against him before he can go to God to have his own trespasses forgiven.

Then look at the effect on the father, or on the guests, or even on the servants — that scene outside had cast its miserable gloom on the entire

company. But there was one other who felt it with a tenfold keenness — the prodigal son. We can imagine the effect on him. This was home, was it? Well, it was a pity he ever came. If this was to be the sort of thing, he had better go. Happier a thousand times among the swine than to endure the boorishness of his self-contained, self-righteous brother. Yes, we drive men from Christ's door many a time by our sorry entertainment. The Church is not spiritualised enough yet to entertain the world. We have no spiritual courtesies. We cultivate our faith and proclaim our hope, but forget that a greater than these is charity. Till men can say of us, "They suffer long and are kind, they are not easily provoked, do not behave themselves unseemly, bear all things, think no evil," we have no chance against the world. One repulsive Christian will drive away a score of prodigals. God's love for poor sinners is very wonderful, but God's patience with ill-natured saints is a deeper mystery.

The worst of the misery caused by ill-temper is that it does no good. Some misery is beneficial, but this is gratuitous woe. Nothing in the world causes such rankling, abiding, unnecessary and unblessed pain. And Christ's words, therefore, when He refers to the breach of the law of love are most severe. "If any man offend one of these little ones," He says, "it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his

neck, and that he were cast into the depth of the sea." That is to say, it is Christ's deliberate verdict that it is better not to live than not to love.

In its ultimate nature Distemper is a sin against love. And however impossible it may be to realize that now, however we may condone it as a pardonable weakness or small infirmity, there *is* no greater sin. A sin against love is a sin against God, for God is love. He that sinneth against love, sinneth against God.

This tracing of the sin to its root now suggests this further topic — its *cure.* Christianity professes to cure anything. The process may be slow, the discipline may be severe, but it can be done. But is not temper a constitutional thing? Is it not hereditary, a family failing, a matter of temperament, and can *that* be cured? Yes, if there is anything in Christianity. If there is no provision for that, then Christianity stands convicted of being unequal to human need. What course then did the father take, in the case before us, to pacify the angry passions of his ill-natured son? Mark that he made no attempt in the first instance to reason with him. To do so is a common mistake, and utterly useless both with ourselves and others. We are perfectly convinced of the puerility of it all, but that does not help us in the least to mend it. The malady has its seat in the *affections,* and therefore the father went there at once. Reason came in its place, and the

son was supplied with valid arguments — stated in the last verse of the chapter — against his conduct, but he was first plied with *Love*.

"Son," said the father, "thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." Analyse these words, and underneath them you will find the rallying cries of all great communities. There lie Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity — the happy symbols with which men have sought to maintain governments and establish kingdoms. "Son" — there is Liberty. "Thou art ever with me" — there is Unity, Fraternity. "All that I have is thine" — there is Equality. If any appeal could rouse a man to give up himself, to abandon selfish ends, under the strong throb of a common sympathy, it is this formula of the Christian Republic. Take the last, Equality, alone — "All that I have is thine." It is absurd to talk of your rights here and your rights there. You have all rights. "All that I have is thine." There is no room for selfishness if there is nothing more that one can possess. And God has made the Equality. God has given us all, and if the memory of His great kindness, His particular kindness to us, be once moved within, the heart must melt to Him, and flow out to all mankind as brothers.

It is quite idle, by force of will, to seek to empty the angry passions out of our life. Who has not made a thousand resolutions in this direction, only and with unutterable mortification to behold them dashed to pieces with the first temp-

tation? The soul is to be made sweet not by taking the acidulous fluids out, but by putting something in — a great love, God's great love. This is to work a chemical change upon them, to renovate and regenerate them, to dissolve them in its own rich fragrant substance. If a man let this into his life, his cure is complete; if not, it is hopeless.

The character most hard to comprehend in the New Testament is the unmerciful servant. For his base extravagance his wife and children were to be sold, and himself imprisoned. He cries for mercy on his knees, and the 10,000 talents, hopeless and enormous debt, is freely cancelled. He goes straight from the kind presence of his lord, and, meeting some poor wretch who owes him a hundred pence, seizes him by the throat and hales him to the prison-cell, from which he himself had just escaped. How a man can rise from his knees, where, forgiven much already, he has just been forgiven more, and go straight from the audience chamber of his God to speak hard words and do hard things, is all but incredible. This servant truly in wasting his master's money must have wasted away his own soul. But grant a man any soul at all, love must follow forgiveness.

Being forgiven much, he *must* love much, not as a duty, but as a necessary consequence; he *must* become a humbler, tenderer man, generous and brotherly. Rooted and grounded in love, his love will grow till it embraces the earth. Then

only he dimly begins to understand his father's gift — "All that I have is thine." The world is his: he cannot injure his own. The ground of benevolence is proprietorship. And all who love God are the proprietors of the world. The meek inherit the earth — all that He has is theirs. All that God has — what is that? Mountain and field, tree and sky, castle and cottage, white man, black man, genius and dullard, prisoner and pauper, sick and aged — all these are mine. If noble and happy, I must enjoy them; if great and beautiful, I must delight in them; if poor and hungry, I must clothe them; if sick and in prison, I must visit them. For they are all mine, all these, and all that God has beside, and I must love all and give myself for all.

Here the theme widens. From Plato to Herbert Spencer reformers have toiled to frame new schemes of Sociology. There is none so grand as the Sociology of Jesus. But we have not found out the New Testament Sociology yet; we have spent the centuries over its theology. Surely man's relation to God may be held as settled now. It is time to take up the other problem, man's relation to man. With a former theology, man as man, as a human being, was of no account. He was a mere theological unit, the x of doctrine, an unknown quantity. He was taught to believe, therefore, not to love. Now we are learning slowly that to believe is to love; that the first commandment is to love God, and

the second *like unto it* — another version of it — is to love man. Not only the happiness but the efficiency of the passive virtues, love as a power, as a practical success in the world, is coming to be recognised. The fact that Christ led no army, that He wrote no book, built no church, spent no money, but that He loved, and so conquered, this is beginning to strike men. And Paul's argument is gaining adherents, that when all prophecies are fulfilled, and all our knowledge becomes obsolete, and all tongues grow unintelligible, this thing, Love, will abide and see them all out one by one into the oblivious past. This is the hope for the world that we shall learn to love, and in learning that, unlearn all anger and wrath and evil-speaking and malice and bitterness.

And this will indeed *be* the world's future. This is heaven. The curtain drops on the story of the prodigal, leaving him *in*, but the elder brother out. And why is obvious. It is impossible for such a man to be in heaven. He would spoil heaven for all who were there. Except such a man be born again he cannot enter the kingdom of God. To get to heaven we must take it in with us.

There are many heavens in the world even now from which we all shut ourselves out by our own exclusiveness — heavens of friendship, of family life, of Christian work, of benevolent ministrations to the poor and ignorant and distressed. Because of some personal pique, some disap-

proval of methods, because the lines of work of some of the workers are not exactly to our taste, we play the elder brother, we are angry and will not go in. This is the naked truth of it, we are simply angry and will not go in. And this bears, if we could see it, its own worst penalty; for there is no severer punishment than just to be left outside, perhaps, to grow old alone, unripe, loveless and unloved. We are angry and will not go in. All sins mar God's image, but sins of temper mar God's image and God's work and man's happiness.

NUMBER II

Why Christ must Depart

A SERMON BEFORE COMMUNION

"*It is expedient for you that I go away.*" — JOHN xvi. 7.

IT was on a communion night like this that the words were spoken. They fell upon the disciples like a thunderbolt startling a summer sky. Three and thirty years He had lived among them. They had lately learned to love Him. Day after day they had shared together the sunshine and the storm, and their hearts clung to Him with a strange tenderness. And just when everything was at its height, when their friendship was now pledged indissolubly in the first most solemn sacrament, the unexpected words come, "I must say good-bye; it is expedient for you that I go away." It was a crushing blow to the little band. They had staked their all upon that love. They had given up home, business, friends, and promised to follow Him. And now He says, "I must go!"

Let us see what He means by it. The words may help us to understand more fully our own relations with Him now that He is gone.

I. The first thing to strike one is the way Jesus took to break the news. It was characteristic. His sayings and doings always came about in the most natural way. Even His profoundest statements of doctrine were invariably *apropos* of some often trivial circumstance happening in the day's round. So now He did not suddenly deliver Himself of the doctrine of the Ascension. It leaked out as it were in the ordinary course of things.

The supper was over; but the friends had much to say to one another that night, and they lingered long around the table. They did not know it was the last supper, never dreamed of it; but there had been an unusual sweetness in their intercourse, and they talked on and on. The hour grew late, but John still leaned on his Master's breast, and the others, grouped round in the twilight, drank in the solemn gladness of the communion evening. Suddenly a shadow falls over this scene. A sinister figure rises stealthily, takes the bag, and makes for the door unobserved. Jesus calls him: hands him the sop. The spell is broken. A terrible revulsion of feeling comes over Him — as if a stab in the dark had struck into His heart. He cannot go on now. It is useless to try. He cannot keep up the perhaps forced spirits.

"Little children," He says very solemnly, His voice choking, "yet a little while I am with you." And "Whither I go ye cannot come."

The hour is late. They think He is getting tired. He means to retire to rest. But Peter asks straight out, "Lord, whither goest Thou?" Into the garden? Back to Galilee? It never occurred to one of them that He meant the Unknown Land.

"Whither I go," He replies a second time, "ye cannot follow Me now, but ye shall follow Me *afterward.*" *Afterward!* The blow slowly falls. In a dim, bewildering way it begins to dawn upon them. It is separation.

We can judge of the effect from the next sentence, "Let not your heart be troubled," He says. He sees their panic and consternation, and doctrine has to stand aside till experimental religion has ministered. And then it is only at intervals that He gets back to it; every sentence almost is interrupted. Questionings and misgivings are started, explanations are insisted on, but the terrible truth will not hide. He always comes back to that — He will not temper its meaning, He still insists that it is absolute, literal; and finally He states it in its most bare and naked form, "It is expedient for you that I go away."

II. Notice His reasons for going away. Why did Jesus go away? We all remember a time when we could not answer that question. We wished He had stayed, and had been here now. The children's hymn expresses a real human feeling, and our hearts burn still as we read it:

"I think, when I read that sweet story of old,
How Jesus was here among men,
He called little children like lambs to His fold,
I should like to have been with Him then.

"I wish that His hands had been placed on my head,
That His arms had been thrown around me,
And that I might have seen His kind look as He said,
'Let the little ones come unto Me.'"

Jesus must have had reasons for disappointing a human feeling so deep, so universal, and so sacred. We may be sure, too, that these reasons intimately concern us. He did not go away because He was tired. It was quite true that He was despised and rejected of men; it was quite true that the pitiless world hated and spurned and trod on Him. But that did not drive Him away. It was quite true that He longed for His Father's house and pined and yearned for His love. But that did not draw Him away. No. He never thought of Himself. It is expedient for *you*, He says, not for Me, that I go.

1. The first reason is one of His own stating. "I go away *to prepare a place for you.*" And the very naming of this is a proof of Christ's considerateness. The burning question with every man who thought about his life in those days was, Whither is this life leading? The present, alas! was dim and inscrutable enough, but the future was a fearful and unsolved mystery. So Christ put that right before He went away. He gave this unknown future form and colour. He

told us — and it is only because we are so accustomed to it that we do not wonder more at the magnificence of the conception — that when our place in this world should know us no more there would be another place ready for us. We do not know much about that place, but the best thing we do know, that *He* prepares it. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man what the Lord went away to prepare for them that love Him. It is better to think of this, to let our thoughts rest on this, that He prepares it, than to fancy details of our own.

But that does not exhaust the matter. Consider the alternative. If Christ had not gone away, what then? We should not either. The circumstances of our future life depended upon Christ's going away to prepare them; but the fact of our going away at all depended on His going away. We could not follow Him hereafter, as He said we should, unless He led first. He had to be the Resurrection and the Life.

And this was part of the preparing a place for us — the preparing a way for us. He prepared a place for us by the way He took to prepare a place. It was a very wonderful way.

In a lonely valley in Switzerland a small band of patriots once marched against an invading force ten times their strength. They found themselves one day at the head of a narrow pass, confronted by a solid wall of spears. They

made assault after assault, but that bristling line remained unbroken. Time after time they were driven back decimated with hopeless slaughter. The forlorn hope rallied for the last time. As they charged, their leader suddenly advanced before them with outstretched arms, and every spear for three or four yards of the line was buried in his body. He fell dead. But he prepared a place for his followers. Through the open breach, over his dead body, they rushed to victory and won the freedom of their country.

So the Lord Jesus went before His people, the Captain of our salvation, sheathing the weapons of death and judgment in Himself, and preparing a place for us with His dead body. Well for us not only that He went away, but that He went by way of the Cross.

2. Another reason why He went away was to be very near. It seems a paradox, but He went away really in order to be near. Suppose, again, He had not gone away; suppose He were here now. Suppose He were still in the Holy Land, at Jerusalem. Every ship that started for the East would be crowded with Christian pilgrims. Every train flying through Europe would be thronged with people going to see Jesus. Every mail-bag would be full of letters from those in difficulty and trial, and gifts of homage to manifest men's gratitude and love. You yourself, let us say, are in one of those ships. The port, when you arrive after the long voyage, is blocked

with vessels of every flag. With much difficulty you land, and join one of the long trains starting for Jerusalem. Far as the eye can reach, the caravans move over the desert in an endless stream. You do not mind the scorching sun, the choking dust, the elbowing crowds, the burning sands. You are in the Holy Land, and you will see Jesus! Yonder, at last, in the far distance, are the glittering spires of the Holy Hill, above all the burnished temple dome beneath which He sits. But what is that dark seething mass stretching for leagues and leagues between you and the Holy City? They have come from the north and from the south, and from the east and from the west, as you have, to look upon their Lord. They wish

> "That His hands might be placed on their head;
> That His arms might be thrown around them."

But it cannot be. You have come to see Jesus, but you will not see Him. They have been there weeks, months, years, and have not seen Him. They are a yard or two nearer, and that is all. The thing is impossible. It is an anti-climax, an absurdity. It would be a social outrage; it would be a physical impossibility.

Now Christ foresaw all this when He said it was expedient that He should go away. Observe He did not say it was necessary — it was *expedient.* The objection to the opposite plan was simply that it would not have worked. So He says to

you, "It is very kind and earnest of you to come so far, but you mistake. Go away back from the walls of the Holy City, over the sea, and you will find Me in your own home. You will find Me where the shepherds found Me, doing their ordinary work; where the woman of Samaria found Me, drawing the water for the forenoon meal; where the disciples found Me, mending nets in their working clothes; where Mary found Me, among the commonplace household duties of a country village." What would religion be, indeed, if the soul-sick had to take their turn like the out-patients waiting at the poor-hour outside the infirmary? How would it be with the old who were too frail to travel to Him, or the poor who could not afford it? How would it be with the blind, who could not see Him; or the deaf, who could not hear Him? It would be physically impossible for millions to obey the Lord's command, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest."

For their sakes it was expedient that He should go away. It was a great blessing for the world that He went. Access to Him is universally complete from every corner of every home in every part of the world. For the poor can have Him always with them. The soul-sick cannot be out of reach of the Physician. The blind can see His beauty now that He has gone away. The deaf hear His voice when all others are silent, and the dumb can pray when they cannot speak.

Yes, the visible Incarnation must of necessity

be brief. Only a small circle could enjoy His actual presence, but a kingdom like Christianity needed a risen Lord. It was expedient for the whole body of its subjects that He went away. He would be nearer man by being apparently further. The limitations of sense subjected Him while He stayed. He was subject to geography, locality, space, and time. But by going away He was in a spaceless land, in a timeless eternity, able to be with all men always even unto the end of the world.

3. Another reason why He went away — although this is also a paradox — was *that we might see Him better.* When a friend is with us we do not really see him so well as when he is away. We only see points, details. It is like looking at a great mountain: you see it best a little way off. Clamber up the flanks of Mont Blanc, you see very little, — a few rocks, a pine or two, a blinding waste of snow; but come down into the Valley of Chamounix and there the monarch dawns upon you in all his majesty.

Christ is the most gigantic figure of history. To take in His full proportions one must be both near and away. The same is true of all greatness. Of all great poets, philosophers, politicians, men of science, it is said that their generation never knew them. They dawn upon us as time rolls past. Then their life comes out in its true perspective, and the symmetry of their work is revealed. We never know our friends,

likewise, till we lose them. We often never know the beauty of a life which is lived very near our own till the hand of death has taken it away. It was expedient for us, therefore, that He should go — that we might see the colossal greatness of His stature, appreciate the loftiness and massiveness of His whole character, and feel the perfect beauty and oneness of His life and work.

4. Still another reason. He went away that we might walk *by faith*. After all, if He had stayed, with all its inconveniences, we should have been walking by sight. And this is the very thing religion is continually trying to undo. The strongest temptation to every man is to guide himself by what he can see, and feel, and handle. This is the core of Ritualism, the foundation of Roman Catholicism, the essence of idolatry. Men want to see God, therefore they make images of Him. We do not laugh at Ritualism; it is intensely human. It is not so much a sin of presumption; it is a sin of mistake. It is a trying to undo the going away of Christ. It is a trying to make believe that He is still here. And the fatal fallacy of it is that it defeats its own end. He who seeks God in tangible form misses the very thing he is seeking, for God is a Spirit. The desire burns within him to see God; the desire is given him to make him spiritual, by giving him a spiritual exercise to do; and he cheats himself by exercising the flesh instead of the spirit. Hunger and thirst after God are an

endowment to raise us out of the seen and temporal. But instead of letting the spiritual appetite elevate us into the spirit, we are apt to degrade the very instrument of our spiritualisation and make it minister to the flesh.

It was expedient in order that the disciples should be spiritualised that Jesus should become a Spirit. Life in the body to all men is short. The mortal dies and puts on immortality. So Christ's great aim is to strengthen the after-life. Therefore He gave exercises in faith to be the education for immortality. Therefore Jesus went away to strengthen the spirit for eternity.

It is not because there is any deep, mysterious value in faith itself that it plays so great a part in religion. It is not because God arbitrarily chooses that we should walk by faith rather than by sight. It is because it is essential to our future; it is because this is the faculty which of all others is absolutely necessary to life in the spirit.

For our true life will be lived in the spirit. In the hereafter there will be nothing carnal. Christ is therefore solicitous to educate our faith, for sight will be useless. There will be no eye, no pupil, no retina, no optic nerve in the hereafter, so faith is the spiritual substitute for them which Christ would develop in us by going away.

5. But the great reason has yet to be mentioned. He went away *that the Comforter might come.*

We have seen how His going away was a provision for the future life. The absent Lord pre-

pares a place there; the absent object of faith educates the souls of the faithful to possess and enjoy it. But He provides for the life that now is. And His going away has to do with the present as much as with the life to come. One day when Jesus was in Perea, a message came to Him that a very dear friend was sick. He lived in a distant village with his two sisters. They were greatly concerned about their brother's illness, and had sent in haste for Jesus. Now Jesus loved Mary and Martha and Lazarus their brother; but He was so situated at the time that He could not go. Perhaps He was too busy, perhaps He had other similar cases on hand; at all events, He could not go. When He went ultimately, it was too late. Hour after hour the sisters waited for Him. They could not believe He would not come; but the slow hours dragged themselves along by the dying man's couch, and he was dead and laid in the grave before Jesus arrived. You can imagine one of His thoughts, at least, as He stands and weeps by that grave with the inconsolable sisters: "It is expedient that I go away. I should have been present at his death-bed scene if I had been away. I will depart and send the Comforter. There will be no summons of sorrow which He will not be able to answer. He will abide with men for ever. Everywhere He will come and go. He will be like the noiseless, invisible wind blowing all over the world wheresoever He listeth."

The doctrine of the Holy Ghost is very simple. Men stumble over it because they imagine it to be something very mysterious and unintelligible. But the whole matter lies here. Our text is the key to it. The Holy Spirit is just what Christ would have been had He been here. He ministers comfort just as Christ would have done — only without the inconveniences of circumstance, without the restriction of space, without the limitations of time. More: we need a personal Christ, but we cannot get it, at least we cannot each get it. So the only alternative is a spiritual Christ, *i. e.* a Holy Spirit, and then we can all get Him. He reproves the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Christ had to go away to make room for a person of the Trinity who could deal with the world. He himself could only reprove the individual of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. But work on a larger scale is done now that He is gone. This is what He refers to when He said, "Greater works than these shall ye do."

And yet Christ did not go away that the Spirit might take His place. Christ is with us Himself. He is with us and yet He is not with us; that is, He is with us by His spirit. The Spirit does not reveal the Spirit. He speaks not of Himself, He reveals Christ. He is the nexus, the connection between the absent Christ and the world — a spiritual presence which can penetrate where the present Christ could not go. It was expedient

for the present Christ to go away that the universal Christ might come to all.

Finally, if all this was expedient for us, this strange relation of Jesus to His people ought to have a startling influence upon our life. Expediency is a practical thing. It was a terrible risk going away. Has the expedient which Christ adopted been worth while to you and me? These three great practical effects at least are obvious.

(1) Christ ought to be as near to us as if He were still here. Nothing so simplifies the whole religious life as this thought. A present, personal Christ solves every difficulty, and meets every requirement of Christian experience. There is a historical Christ, a national Christ, a theological Christ — we each want Christ. So we have Him. For purposes of expediency, for a little while, He has become invisible. It is our part to have Him.

> "More present to Faith's vision keen
> Than any other vision seen;
> More near, more intimately nigh
> Than any other earthly tie."

(2) Then consider what an incentive to honest faithfulness this is. The kingdom of Heaven is like a man travelling into a far country. And before he went he called his servants and gave to every man his work.

Are we doing it faithfully? Are we doing it at all? The visible eye of the Master is off us.

No one *inspects* our work. Wood, hay, stubble, no man knows. It is the test of the absent Christ. He is training us to a kind of faithfulness whose high quality is unattained by any other earthly means. It was after the Lord was gone that the disciples *worked*. They grew fast after this — in vigour, in usefulness, in reliance, in strength of character. Hitherto they had rested in His love. Did you ever think what a risk it was for Him to go away? It was a terrible risk — to leave us here all by ourselves. And yet this was one of His ways of elevating us. There is nothing exalts a man like confidence put in him. So He went away and let them try themselves.

We cannot always sit at the communion table. We partake of the feast not so much as a luxury, though it is that, but to give us strength to work. We think our Sabbath services, our prayers, our Bible reading, are our religion. It is not so. We do these things to help us to be religious in other things. These are the mere meals, and a workman gets no wages for his meals. It is for the work he does. The value of this communion is not estimated yet. It will take the coming week to put the value upon it. In itself it counts little; we shall see what it is, by what we shall be.

Every communicant is left by Christ with a solemn responsibility. Christ's confidence in us is unspeakably touching. Christ was sure of us; He felt the world was safe in our hands. He was away, but we would be Christs to it; the

Light of the World was gone, but he would light a thousand lights, and leave each of us as one to illuminate one corner of its gloom.

(3) *Lastly*, He has only gone for a little while: "Behold, I come quickly." The probation will soon be past. "Be good children till I come back," He has said, like a mother leaving her little ones, "and I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, ye may be also." So we wait till He come again — we wait till it is expedient for Him to come back.

"So I am waiting quietly every day,
Whenever the sun shines brightly, I rise and say, 'Surely it is the shining of His face;'
And when a shadow falls across the window of the room
Where I am working my appointed task,
I lift my head and ask if He is come."

NUMBER III

Going to the Father

WRITTEN AFTER THE DEATH OF A FRIEND

"*I go to my Father.*" — JOHN xiv. 12.

YOU can unlock a man's whole life if you watch what *words* he uses most. We have each a small set of words, which, though we are scarce aware of it, we always work with, and which really express all that we mean by life, or have found out of it. For such words embalm the past for us. They have become ours by a natural selection throughout our career of all that is richest and deepest in our experience. So our vocabulary is our history, and our favourite words are ourselves.

Did you ever notice Christ's favourite words? If you have, you must have been struck by two things — their simplicity and their fewness. Some half-dozen words embalm all His theology, and these are, without exception, humble, elementary, simple monosyllables. They are such words as these: world, life, trust, love.

But none of these was the greatest word of Christ. His great word was new to religion.

There was no word there, when He came, rich enough to carry the new truth He was bringing to men. So He imported into religion one of the grandest words of human language, and transfigured it, and gave it back to the world illuminated and transformed, as the watchword of the new religion. That word was Father.

The world's obligation to the Lord Jesus is that He gave us that word. We should never have thought of it; if we had, we should never have dared to say it. It is a pure revelation. Surely it is the most touching sight of the world's past to see God's only begotten Son coming down from heaven to try to teach the stammering dumb inhabitants of this poor planet to say, "Our Father."

It is that word which has gathered the great family of God together; and when we come face to face with the real, the solid, and the moving in our religion, it is to find all its complexity resolvable into this simplicity, that God, whom others call King Eternal, Infinite Jehovah, is, after all, our Father, and we are His children.

This, after all, is religion. And to live daily in this simplicity, is to live like Christ.

It takes a great deal to succeed as a Christian — such a great deal, that not many do succeed. And the great reason for want of success is the want of a central word. Men will copy anything rather than a principle. A relationship is always harder to follow than a fact. We study the de-

tails of Christ's actions, the point of this miracle and of that, the circumferential truth of this parable and of that, but to copy details is not to copy Christ. To live greatly like Christ is not to agonise daily over details, to make anxious comparisons with what *we* do and what *He* did, but a much more simple thing. It is to re-echo Christ's word. It is to have that calm, patient, assured spirit, which reduces life simply to this — a going to the Father.

Not one man in a hundred, probably, has a central word in his Christian life; and the consequence is this, that there is probably nothing in the world so disorderly and slipshod as personal spiritual experience. With most of us it is a thing without stability or permanence, it is changed by every trifle we meet, by each new mood or thought. It is a series of disconnected approaches to God, a disorderly succession of religious impulses, an irregulation of conduct, now on this principle, now on that, one day because we read something in a book, the next because it was contradicted in another. And when circumstances lead us really to examine ourselves, everything is indefinite, hazy, unsatisfactory, and all that we have for the Christian life are the shreds perhaps of the last few Sabbaths' sermons and a few borrowed patches from other people's experience. So we live in perpetual spiritual oscillation and confusion, and we are almost glad to let any friend or any

book upset the most cherished thought we have.

Now the thing which steadied Christ's life was the thought that He was going to His Father. This one thing gave it unity, and harmony, and success. During His whole life He never forgot His Word for a moment. There is no sermon of His where it does not occur; there is no prayer, however brief, where it is missed. In that first memorable sentence of His, which breaks the solemn spell of history and makes one word resound through thirty silent years, the one word is this; and all through the after years of toil and travail "the Great Name" was always hovering on His lips, or bursting out of His heart. In its beginning and in its end, from the early time when He spoke of His Father's business till He finished the work that was given Him to do, His life, disrobed of all circumstance, was simply this, "I go to My Father."

If we take this principle into our own lives, we shall find its influence tell upon us in three ways:

I. It explains Life.

II. It sustains Life.

III. It completes Life.

I. It explains Life. Few men, I suppose, do not feel that life needs explaining. We think we see through some things in it — partially; but most of it, even to the wisest mind, is enig-

matic. Those who know it best are the most bewildered by it, and they who stand upon the mere rim of the vortex confess that even for them it is overspread with cloud and shadow. What is my life? whither do I go? whence do I come? these are the questions which are not worn down yet, although the whole world has handled them.

To these questions there are but three answers — one by the poet, the other by the atheist, the third by the Christian.

(*a*) The poet tells us, and philosophy says the same only less intelligibly, that life is a sleep, a dream, a shadow. It is a vapour that appeareth for a little and vanisheth away; a meteor hovering for a moment between two unknown eternities; bubbles, which form and burst upon the river of time. This philosophy explains nothing. It is a taking refuge in mystery. Whither am I going? Virtually the poet answers, "I am going to the Unknown."

(*b*) The atheist's answer is just the opposite. He knows no unknown. He understands all, for there is nothing more than we can see or feel. Life is what matter is; the soul is phosphorus. Whither am I going? "I go to dust," he says; "death ends all." And this explains nothing. It is worse than mystery. It is contradiction. It is utter darkness.

(*c*) But the Christian's answer explains something. Where is he going? "I go to my

Father." This is not a definition of his death — there is no death in Christianity; it is a definition of the Christian life. All the time it is a going to the Father. Some travel swiftly, some are long upon the road, some meet many pleasant adventures by the way, others pass through fire and peril; but though the path be short or winding, and though the pace be quick or slow, it is a going to the Father.

Now this explains life. It explains the two things in life which are most inexplicable. For one thing, it explains why there is more pain in the world than pleasure. God knows, although we scarce do, there is something better than pleasure — progress. Pleasure, mere pleasure, is animal. He gives that to the butterfly. But progress is the law of life to the immortal. So God has arranged our life as progress, and its working principle is evolution. Not that there is no pleasure in it. The Father is too good to His children for that. But the shadows are all shot through it, for He fears lest we should forget there is anything more. Yes, God is too good to leave His children without indulgences, without far more than we deserve; but He is too good to let them spoil us. Our pleasures therefore are mere *entertainments*. We are entertained like passing guests at the inns on the roadside. Yet after even the choicest meals we dare not linger. We must take the pilgrim's staff again and go on our way to the Father.

Sooner or later we find out that life is not a holiday, but a discipline. Earlier or later we all discover that the world is not a playground. It is quite clear God means it for a school. The moment we forget that, the puzzle of life begins. We try to play in school; the Master does not mind that so much for its own sake, for He likes to see His children happy, but in our playing we neglect our lessons. We do not see how much there is to learn, and we do not care. But our Master cares. He has a perfectly overpowering and inexplicable solicitude for our education; and because He loves us, He comes into the school sometimes and speaks to us. He may speak very softly and gently, or very loudly. Sometimes a look is enough, and we understand it, like Peter, and go out at once and weep bitterly. Sometimes the voice is like a thunder-clap startling a summer night. But one thing we may be sure of: the task He sets us to is never measured by our delinquency. The discipline may seem far less than our desert, or even to our eye ten times more. But it is not measured by these — it is measured by God's solicitude for our progress; measured solely by God's love; measured solely that the scholar may be better educated when he arrives at his Father. The discipline of life is a preparation for meeting the Father. When we arrive there to behold His beauty, we must have the educated eye; and that must be trained here. We must

become so pure in heart — and it needs much practice — that we shall see God. That explains life — why God puts man in the crucible and makes him pure by fire.

When we see Him, we must speak to Him. We have that language to learn. And that is perhaps why God makes us pray so much. Then we are to walk with Him in white. Our sanctification is a putting on this white. But there has to be much disrobing first; much putting off of filthy rags. This is why God makes man's beauty to consume away like the moth. He takes away the moth's wings, and gives the angel's, and man goes the quicker and the lovelier to the Father.

It is quite true, indeed, besides all this, that sometimes shadow falls more directly from definite sin. But even then its explanation is the same. We lose our way, perhaps, on the way to the Father. The road is rough, and we choose the way with the flowers beside it, instead of the path of thorns. Often and often thus, purposely or carelessly, we lose the way. So the Lord Jesus has to come and look for us. And He may have to lead us through desert and danger, before we regain the road — before we *are* as we *were* — and the voice says to us sadly once more, "This is the way to the Father."

The other thing which this truth explains is, why there is so much that is unexplained. After we have explained all, there is much left. All

our knowledge, it is said, is but different degrees of darkness. But we know *why we do not know why*. It is because we are going to our Father. We are only going: we are not there yet. Therefore patience. "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know. Hereafter, thou shalt know." Hereafter, because the chief joy of life is to have something to look forward to. But, hereafter, for a deeper reason. Knowledge is only given for action. Knowing only exists for doing: and already nearly all men know to do more than they do do. So, till we do all that we know, God retains the balance till we can use it. In the larger life of the hereafter, more shall be given, proportionate to the vaster sphere and the more ardent energies.

Necessarily, therefore, much of life is still twilight. But our perfect refuge is to anticipate a little, and go in thought to our Father, and, like children tired out with efforts to put together the disturbed pieces of a puzzle, wait to take the fragments to our Father.

And yet, even that fails sometimes. He seems to hide from us and the way is lost indeed. The footsteps which went before us up till then cease, and we are left in the chill, dark night alone. If we could only see the road, we should know it went to the Father. But we cannot say we are going to the Father; we can only say *we would like to go*. "Lord," we cry, "we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?"

"Whither I go," is the inexplicable answer, "ye know not now." Well is it for those who at such times are near enough to catch the rest: "But ye shall know hereafter."

II. Secondly, and in a few words, this sustains Life.

A year or two ago some of the greatest and choicest minds of this country laboured, in the pages of one of our magazines, to answer the question, "Is Life worth living?" It was a triumph for religion, some thought, that the keenest intellects of the nineteenth century should be stirred with themes like this. It was not so; it was the surest proof of the utter heathenism of our age. Is Life worth living? As well ask, Is air worth breathing? The real question is this — taking the definition of life here suggested — Is it worth while going to the Father?

Yet we can understand the question. On any other definition we can understand it. On any other definition life is very far from being worth living. Without that, life is worse than an enigma; it is an inquisition. Life is either a discipline, or a most horrid cruelty. Man's best aims here are persistently thwarted, his purest aspirations degraded, his intellect systematically insulted, his spirit of inquiry is crushed, his love mocked, and his hope stultified. There is no solution whatever to life without this; there is nothing to sustain either mind or soul amid its terrible mystery but this; there is nothing even

to account for mind and soul. And it will always be a standing miracle that men of powerful intellect who survey life, who feel its pathos and bitterness, and are shut up all the time by their beliefs to impenetrable darkness — I say it will always be a standing miracle how such men, with the terrible unsolved problems all around them, can keep reason from reeling and tottering from its throne. If life is not a going to the Father, it is not only not worth living, it is an insult to the living; and it is one of the strangest mysteries how men who are large enough in one direction to ask that question, and too limited in another to answer it, should voluntarily continue to live at all.

There is nothing to sustain life but this thought. And it does sustain life. Take even an extreme case, and you will see how. Take the darkest, saddest, most pathetic life of the world's history. That was Jesus Christ's. See what this truth *practically* was to Him. It gave Him a life of absolute composure in a career of most tragic trials.

You have noticed often, and it is inexpressibly touching, how as His life narrows, and troubles thicken around Him, He leans more and more upon this. And when the last days draw near — as the memorable chapters in John reveal them to us — with what clinging tenderness He alludes in almost every second sentence to "My Father." There is a wistful eagerness in these closing words which is strangely melting — like one ending a letter at sea when land is coming into sight.

This is the Christian's only stay in life. It provides rest for his soul, work for his character, an object, an inconceivably sublime object, for his ambition. It does not stagger him to be a stranger here, to feel the world passing away. The Christian is like the pearl-diver, who is out of the sunshine for a little, spending his short day amid rocks and weeds and dangers at the bottom of the ocean. Does he desire to spend his life there? No, but his master does. Is his life there? No, his life is up above. A communication is open to the surface, and the fresh pure life comes down to him from God. Is he not wasting time there? He is gathering pearls for his Master's crown. Will he always stay there? When the last pearl is gathered, the "Come up higher" will beckon him away, and the weights which kept him down will become an exceeding weight of glory, and he will go, he and these he brings with him, to his Father.

He feels, to change the metaphor, like a man in training for a race. It is months off still, but it is nearer him than to-morrow, nearer than anything else. Great things are always near things. So he lives in his future. Ask him why this deliberate abstinence from luxury in eating and drinking. "He is keeping his life," he says. Why this self-denial, this separation from worldliness, this change to a quiet life from revelries far into the night? "He is keeping his life." He cannot have both the future and the present; and

he knows that every regulated hour, and every temptation scorned and set aside, is adding a nobler tissue to his frame and keeping his life for the prize that is to come.

Trial to the Christian is training for eternity, and he is perfectly contented; for he knows that "he who loveth his life in this world shall lose it; but he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." He is keeping his life till he gets to the Father.

III. Lastly, in a word, this completes life.

Life has been defined as a going to the Father. It is quite clear that there must come a time in the history of all those who live this life when they reach the Father. This is the most glorious moment of life. Angels attend at it. Those on the other side must hail the completing of another soul with ineffable rapture. When they are yet a great way off, the Father runs and falls on their neck and kisses them.

On this side we call that Death. It means reaching the Father. It is not departure, it is arrival; not sleep, but waking. For life to those who live like Christ is not a funeral procession. It is a triumphal march to the Father. And the entry at the last in God's own chariot in the last hour of all. No, as we watch a life which is going to the Father, we cannot think of night, of gloom, of dusk and sunset. It is life which is the night, and Death is sunrise.

"Pray moderately," says an old saint, "for the

lives of Christ's people." *Pray moderately.* We may want them on our side, he means, but Christ may need them on His. He has seen them a great way off, and set His heart upon them, and asked the Father to make them come quickly. "I will," He says, "that such an one should be with Me where I am." So it is better that they should go to the Father.

These words have a different emphasis to different persons. There are three classes to whom they come home with a peculiar emphasis: —

1. They speak to those who are staying away from God. "I do not wonder at what men suffer," says Ruskin, "I wonder often at what they lose." My fellow pilgrim, you do not know what you are losing by not going to the Father. You live in an appalling mystery. You have nothing to explain your life nor to sustain it; no boundary line on the dim horizon to complete it. When life is done you are going to leap into the dark. You will cross the dark river and land on the further shore alone. No one will greet you. You and the Inhabitant of Eternity will be strangers. Will you not to-day arise and go to your Father?

2. They speak, next, to all God's people. Let *us* remember that we are going to the Father. Even now are we the sons of God. Oh let us live like it — more simple, uncomplaining, useful, separate, joyful as those who march with music, yet sober as those who are to com-

pany with Christ. The road is heavy, high road and low road, but we shall soon be home. God grant us a sure arrival in our Father's house.

3. And this voice whispers yet one more message to the mourning. Did Death end all? Is it well with the child? It is well. The last inn by the roadside has been passed — that is all, and a voice called to us, "Good-bye! I go to my Father."

NUMBER IV

The Eccentricity of Religion

"*They said, He is beside Himself.*" — MARK iii. 21.

THE most pathetic life in the history of the world is the life of the Lord Jesus. Those who study it find out, every day, a fresh sorrow. Before He came it was already foretold that He would be acquainted with grief, but no imagination had ever conceived the darkness of the reality.

It began with one of the bitterest kinds of sorrow — the sorrow of an enforced silence. For thirty years He saw, but dared not act. The wrongs He came to redress were there. The hollowest religion ever known — a mere piece of acting — was being palmed off around Him on every side as the religion of the living God. He saw the poor trodden upon, the sick untended, the widow unavenged, His Father's people scattered, His truth misrepresented, and the whole earth filled with hypocrisy and violence. He saw this, grew up amongst it, knew how to cure it. Yet He was dumb, He opened not His mouth. How He held in His breaking spirit, till

the slow years dragged themselves out, it is impossible to comprehend.

Then came the public life, the necessity to breathe its atmosphere: the temptation, the contradiction of sinners, the insults of the Pharisees, the attempts on His life, the dulness of His disciples, the Jews' rejection of Him, the apparent failure of His cause, Gethsemane, Calvary. Yet these were but the more marked shades in the darkness which blackened the whole path of the Man of Sorrows.

But we are confronted here with an episode in His life which is not included in any of these; an episode which had a bitterness all its own, and such as has fallen to the lot of few to know. It was not the way the world treated Him; it was not the Pharisees; it was not something which came from His enemies; it was something His friends did. When He left the carpenter's shop and went out into the wider life, His friends were watching Him. For some time back they had remarked a certain strangeness in His manner. He had always been strange among His brothers, but now this was growing upon Him. He has said much stranger things of late, made many strange plans, gone away on curious errands to strange places. What did it mean? Where was it to end? Were the family to be responsible for all this eccentricity? One sad day it culminated. It was quite clear to them now. He was not responsible for what He was doing. It was His mind,

alas! that had become affected. He was beside Himself. In plain English, *He was mad!*

An awful thing to say when it is true, a more awful thing when it is not; a more awful thing still when the accusation comes from those we love, from those who know us best. It was the voice of no enemy, it came from His own home. It was His own mother, perhaps, and His brethren, who pointed this terrible finger at Him; apologising for Him, entreating the people never to mind Him, He was beside Himself — He was mad.

There should have been one spot surely upon God's earth for the Son of Man to lay His head — one roof, at least, in Nazareth, with mother's ministering hand and sister's love for the weary Worker. But His very home is closed to Him. He has to endure the furtive glances of eyes which once loved Him, the household watching Him and whispering one to another, the cruel suspicion, the laying hands upon Him, hands which were once kind to Him, and finally, the overwhelming announcement of the verdict of His family, "He is beside Himself." Truly He came to His own, and His own received Him not.

What makes it seemly to dig up this harrowing memory to-day, and emphasise a thought which we cannot but feel lies on the borderland of blasphemy? Because the significance of that scene is still intense. It has a peculiar lesson

for us who are to profess ourselves followers of Christ — a lesson in the counting of the cost. Christ's life, from first to last, was a dramatised parable — too short and too significant to allow even a scene which well might rest in solemn shadow to pass by unimproved.

I. Observe, from the world's standpoint, *the charge is true.* It is useless to denounce this as a libel, a bitter, blasphemous calumny. It is not so — it is true. There was no alternative. Either He was the Christ, the Son of the living God, or He was beside Himself. A holy life is always a phenomenon. The world knoweth it not. It is either supernatural or morbid.

For what is being beside oneself? What is madness? It is eccentricity — ec-centr-icity — having a different centre from other people. Here is a man, for instance, who devotes his life to collecting objects of antiquarian interest, old coins perhaps, or old editions of books. His centre is odd, his life revolves in an orbit of his own. Therefore, his friends say, he is eccentric.

Or here is an engine with many moving wheels, large and small, cogged and plain, but each revolving upon a central axis, and describing a perfect circle. But at one side there is one small wheel which does not turn in a circle. Its motion is different from all the rest, and the changing curve it describes is unlike any ordinary line of the mathematician. The engineer

tells you that this is *the eccentric*, because it has a peculiar centre.

Now when Jesus Christ came among men He found them nearly all revolving in one circle. There was but one centre to human life — self. Man's chief end was to glorify himself and enjoy himself for ever. Then, as now, by the all but unanimous consensus of the people, this present world was sanctioned as the legitimate object of all human interest and enterprise. By the whole gravitation of society, Jesus — as a man — must have been drawn to the very verge of this vast vortex of self-indulgence, personal ease and pleasure, which had sucked in the populations of the world since time began. But he stepped back. He refused absolutely to be attracted. He put everything out of His life that had even a temptation in it to the world's centre. He humbled Himself — there is no place in the world's vortex for humbleness. He became of no reputation — nor for namelessness. He emptied Himself — gravitation cannot act on emptiness. So the prince of this world came, but found nothing in Him. He found nothing, because the true centre of that life was not to be seen. It was with God. The unseen and the eternal moved Him. He did not seek His own happiness, but that of others. He went about doing good. His object in going about was not gain, but to do good.

Now all this was very eccentric. It was living

on new lines altogether. He did God's will. He pleased not Himself. His centre was to one side of self. He was beside Himself. From the world's view-point it was simply madness.

Think of this idea of His, for instance, of starting out into life with so quixotic an idea as that of doing good; the simplicity of the expectation that the world ever would become good; this irrational talk about meat to eat that they knew not of, about living water; these extraordinary beatitudes, predicating sources of happiness which had never been heard of; these paradoxical utterances of which He was so fond, such as that the way to find life was to lose it, and to lose life in this world was to keep it to life eternal. What could these be but mere hallucination and dreaming! It was inevitable that men should laugh and sneer at Him. He was unusual. He would not go with the multitude. And men were expected to go with the multitude. What the multitude thought, said, and did, were the right things to have thought, said, and done. And if any one thought, said, or did differently, his folly be on his own head, he was beside himself, he was mad.

II. *Every man who lives like Christ produces the same reaction upon the world.* This is an inevitable consequence. What men said of Him, if we are true to Him, they will say of you and me. The servant is not above his master. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute

you. A Christian must be different from other people. Time has not changed the essential difference between the spirit of the world and the spirit of Christ. They are radically and eternally different. And from the world's standpoint still Christianity is eccentricity. For what, again, is Christianity? It is the projection into the world of these lines along which Christ lived. It is a duplicating in modern life of the spirit, the method, and the aims of Jesus, a following through the world the very footprints He left behind. And if these footprints were at right angles to the broad beaten track the world went along in His day, they will be so still. It is useless to say the distinction has broken down. These two roads are still at right angles. The day may be, when the path of righteousness shall be the glorious highway for all the earth. But it is not now. Christ did not expect it would be so. He made provision for the very opposite. He prepared His Church beforehand for the reception it would get in the world. He gave no hope that it would be an agreeable one. Light must conflict with darkness, truth with error. There is no sanctioned place in the world as yet for a life with God as its goal, and self-denial as its principle. Meekness must be victimised; spirituality must be misunderstood; true religion must be burlesqued. Holiness must make a strong ferment and reaction, in family or community, office or workshop, wherever it is introduced. "Think

not that I am come to send peace on earth, I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's foes [He might well say it] shall be they of his own household."

True religion is no milk-and-water experience. It is a fire. It is a sword. It is a burning, consuming heat, which must radiate upon everything around. The change to the Christlike Life is so remarkable that when one really undergoes it, he cannot find words in common use by which he can describe its revolutionary character. He has to recall the very striking phrases of the New Testament, which once seemed such exaggerations: "A new *man*, a new *creature;* a new *heart*, a new *birth*." His very life has been taken down and re-crystallised round the new centre. He has been born again.

The impression his friends receive from him now is the impression of eccentricity. The change is bound to strike them, for it is radical, central. They will call in unworthy motives to account for the difference; they will say it is a mere temporary fit, and will pass away. They will say he has shown a weakness which they did not expect from him, and try to banter him out of his novel views and stricter life. This, in its mildest form, is the modern equivalent of "He is beside himself." And it cannot be helped. It is the legiti-

mate reproach of the Cross. The words are hard, but not new. Has it not come down that long line of whom the world was not worthy? Its history, alas! is well known. It fell on the first Christians in a painful and even vulgar form.

The little Church had just begun to live. The disciples stood after the great day of Pentecost contemplating that first triumph of Christ's cause with unbounded joy. At last an impression had been made upon the world. The enterprise was going to succeed, and the whole earth would fill with God's glory. They little calculated the impression they made on the world was the impression of their own ridiculousness. "What meaneth this?" the people asked. "It meant," the disciples would have said, "that the Holy Ghost, who was to come in His name, was here, that God's grace was stirring the hearts of men and moving them to repent." The people had a different answer. "These men," was the coarse reply, "are full of new wine." Not mad this time — they are intoxicated!

Time passed, and Paul tells us the charge was laid at his door. He had made that great speech in the hall of the Cæsarean palace before Agrippa and Festus. He told them of the grace of God in his conversion, and closed with an eloquent confession of his Lord. What impression had he made upon his audience? The impression of a madman. "As he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, 'Paul! thou art beside

thyself; much learning hath made thee mad.'" Poor Paul! How you feel for him when the cruel blow was struck. But there was no answer to it. From their view-point it was perfectly true. And so it has been with all saints to the present hour. It matters not if they speak like Paul, the words of soberness. It matters not if they are men of burning zeal like Xavier and Whitfield, men of calm spirit like Tersteegen and à Kempis, men of learning like Augustine, or of ordinary gifts like Wesley, — the effect of all saintly lives upon the world is the same. They are to the Jews a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness.

It is not simply working Christianity that is an offence. The whole spiritual life, to the natural man, is an eccentric thing. Take such a manifestation, for instance, as Prayer. The scientific men of the day have examined it and pronounced it hallucination. Or take Public Prayer. A congregation of people with bowed heads, shut eyes, hushed voices, invoking, confessing, pleading, entreating One who, though not seen, is said to see, who, speaking not, is said to answer. There is no other name for this incantation from the world's standpoint than eccentricity, delusion, madness. We are not ashamed of the terms. They are the guarantee of quality. And all high quality in the world is subject to the same reproach. For we are discussing a universal principle. It applies to inventors, to discoverers, to philosophers, to poets, to all men who have been better or higher

than their time. These men are never understood by their contemporaries. And if there are martyrs of science, the centres of science being in this world, seen, demonstrated, known, how much more must there be martyrs for religion whose centre is beyond the reach of earthly eye?

III. It follows from this, that the more active religion is, the more unpopular it must be.

Christ's religion did not trouble His friends at first. For thirty years, at all events, they were content to put up with it. But as it grew in intensity they lost patience. When He called the twelve disciples, they gave Him up. His work went on, the world said nothing for some time. But as His career became aberrant more and more, the family feeling spread, gained universal ground. Even the most beautiful and tender words He uttered were quoted in evidence of His state. For John tells us that after that exquisite discourse in the tenth chapter about the Good Shepherd, there was a division among the Jews for these sayings: "And many of them said, He hath a devil and is mad. Why hear ye Him?" It seemed utter raving.

Have you ever noticed — and there is nothing more touching in history — how Christ's path narrowed?

The first great active period is called in books The year of public favour. On the whole it was a year of triumph. The world received Him for a time. Vast crowds followed Him. The Baptist's

audience left him and gathered round the new voice. Palestine rang with the name of Jesus. Noblemen, rulers, rabbis, vied with one another in entertaining Him. But the excitement died down suddenly and soon.

The next year is called The year of opposition. The applause was over. The crowds thinned. On every hand He was obstructed. The Sadducees left Him. The Pharisees left Him. The political party were roused into opposition. The Jews, the great mass of the people, gave Him up. His path was narrowing.

With the third period came the end. The path was very narrow now. There were but twelve left to Him when the last act of the drama opens. They are gathered on the stage together for the last time. But it must narrow still. One of the disciples, after receiving the sop, goes out. Eleven are left Him. Peter soon follows. There are but ten. One by one they leave the stage, till all forsook Him and fled, and He is left to die alone. Well might He cry, as He hung there in this awful solitude — as if even God had forgotten Him, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

But this is not peculiar to Jesus. It is typical of the life of every Christian. His path, too, must narrow. As he grows in grace, he grows in isolation. He feels that God is detaching his life from all around it and drawing him to Himself for a more intimate fellowship. But as the communion is nearer, the chasm which separates him from his

fellow-man must widen. The degree of a man's religion, indeed, is to be gauged by the degree of his rejection by the world. With the early Christians was not this the commonest axiom, "We told you before," did not Paul warn them, "that we should suffer"? "Unto some it was given in the behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." It was the position of honour, as it were, in the family of God to be counted worthy of being persecuted for the sake of Christ.

It is a sad reflection that, as in the case of Christ, the keenest suffering may come sometimes still from one's own family circle. Among our friends there may be one on whom we all look askance — one who is growing up in the beauty of holiness, and we not knowing what it is that makes him strange. It often needs Death to teach us the beauty of a life which has been lived beside our own; and we only know the worth of it when God proves it by taking it to Himself.

Finally, it may be objected to all this that if eccentricity is a virtue, it is easily purchased. Any one can set up for an eccentric character. And if that is the desideratum of religion we shall have candidates enough for the office. But it remains to define the terms on which a Christian shall be eccentric — Christ's own terms. And let them be guides to us in our eccentricity, for without them we shall be not Christians, but fanatics.

The qualities which distinguish the eccentricity of godliness from all other eccentricities are three; and we gather them all from the Life of Christ.

1. Notice, His eccentricity *was not destructive.* Christ took the world as He found it, He left it as it was. He had no quarrel with existing institutions. He did not overthrow the church — He went to church. He said nothing against politics — He supported the government of the country. He did not denounce Society — His first public action was to go to a marriage. His great aim, in fact, outwardly, and all along, was to be as normal, as little eccentric as possible. The true fanatic always tries the opposite. The Spirit alone was singular in Jesus; a fanatic always spoils his cause by extending it to the letter. Christ came not to destroy, but to fulfil. A fanatic comes not to fulfil, but to destroy. If we would follow the eccentricity of our Master, let it not be in asceticism, in denunciation, in punctiliousness, and scruples about trifles, but in largeness of heart, singleness of eye, true breadth of character, true love to men, and heroism for Christ.

2. *It was perfectly composed.* We think of eccentricity as associated with frenzy, nervousness, excitableness, ungovernable enthusiasm. But the life of Jesus was a calm. It was a life of marvellous composure. The storms were all about it, tumult and tempest, tempest and tumult, waves breaking over Him all the time till the worn body

was laid in the grave. But the inner life was as a sea of glass. It was a life of perfect composure. To come near it even now is to be calmed and soothed. Go to it at any moment, the great calm is there. The request to "come" at any moment was a standing invitation all through His life. Come unto Me at My darkest hour, in My heaviest trial, on My busiest day, and I will give you Rest. And when the very bloodhounds were gathering in the streets of Jerusalem to hunt Him down, did He not turn to the quaking group around Him and bequeath to them — a last legacy — "My Peace"?

There was no frenzy about His life, no excitement. In quietness and confidence the most terrible days sped past. In patience and composure the most thrilling miracles were wrought. Men came unto Him, and they found not restlessness, but Rest. Composure is to be had for faith. We shall be worse than fanatics if we attempt to go along the lonely path with Christ without this spirit. We shall do harm, not good. We shall leave half-done work. We shall wear out before our time. Do not say, "Life is short." Christ's life was short; yet He finished the work that was given Him to do. He was never in a hurry. And if God has given us anything to do for Him, He will give time enough to finish it with a repose like Christ's.

3. This life was consistent.

From the Christian standpoint a consistent life

is the only sane life. It is not worth while being religious without being thorough. An inconsistent Christian is the true eccentric. He is the true phenomenon in the religious world; to his brother Christian the only madman. For madness, in a sense, is inconsistency; madness is incoherency, irrelevancy, disconnectedness; and surely there is nothing more disconnected than a belief in God and Eternity and no corresponding life. And that man is surely beside himself who assumes the name of Christ, pledges perhaps in sacramental wine, to be faithful to His name and cause, and who from one year to another never lifts a finger to help it. The man who is really under a delusion, is he who bears Christ's name, who has no uneasiness about the quality of his life, nor any fear for the future, and whose true creed is that

> He lives for himself, he thinks for himself,
> For himself, and none beside;
> Just as if Jesus had never lived,
> As if He had never died.

Yes, a consistent eccentricity is the only sane life. "An enthusiastic religion is the perfection of common sense." And to be beside oneself for Christ's sake is to be beside Christ, which is man's chief end for time and eternity.

NUMBER V

"To Me to Live is Christ"

(In connection with Acts ix. 1–18)

Philippians i. 21

THERE is no more significant sign of the days in which we live than the interest society seems to be taking in the biographies of great men. Almost all the more popular recent books, for instance — the books which every one is reading and has to read — come under the catalogue of biography; and, to meet the demand, two or three times in each season the market has to be supplied with the lives, in minute detail, of men who but for this would perhaps have lain in unnoticed graves.

This thirst for memoirs and lives and letters is not at all to be put down in every case to the hero worship which is natural to every heart. It means, perhaps, a higher thing than this. It means, in the first place, that great living is being appreciated for its own sake; and, in the second, that great living is being imitated. If it is true that any of us are beginning to appreciate greatness for its own sake — greatness, that is to say,

in the sense of great and true living — it is one of the most hopeful symptoms of our history. And if we are, further, going on from the mere admiration of great men to try and live like them, we are obeying one of the happiest impulses of our being. There is indeed no finer influence abroad than the influence of great men in great books, and all that literature can do in supplying the deformed world with worthy and shapely models is entitled to gratitude and respect.

But a shadow sometimes comes over this thought of the magnetic attraction which greatness is having upon our age — the thought how hard it is to get our greatness *pure*. The well is deep, it may be, and the fountain sparkles to the eye; but we ask perhaps for a guarantee of *quality* in vain. Each new ideal we adjust our life to copy turns out to have its adulteration of selfishness or pride, like the one we studied last, till the pattern we sought to follow surprises us by becoming a beacon for us to shun.

There are a few biographies, however, where men may find their greatness pure; and amongst them is one familiar writing which, though seldom looked at as biographical in this sense, really contains the life and letters of the greatest man probably of human history. That man was Paul. The life of Paul the man, apart from the theology of Paul the Apostle, is a legitimate and fruitful study from the mere standpoint of the biography

of a great and successful life. Judged by his influence on human history, no single life is entitled to more admiration for what it has done, or indeed more worthy of imitation for what it was. And in our quest after a true life, a worthy and satisfying life, there may be some light for us in this old biography which we have missed perhaps in the lives of later men.

If we were to begin by seeking an appropriate motto for Paul's life, we should not need to go further than the quotation which forms our text. This fragment from one of his own letters lets us in at once to the whole secret of his life. The true discovery of a character is the discovery of its ideals. Paul spares us any speculation in his case. "To me to live," he says, "is Christ." This is the motto of his life, the ruling passion of it, which at once explains the nature of his success and accounts for it. He lives for Christ. "To me to live is Christ."

Now here at the outset is a valuable practical point settled in this biography. When we turn to the biographies of most great men, we find either no key or a very complex one; and we rise from the perusal with nothing more than a vague desire to do better, but with no discovery *how*. We gain stimulus, indeed, but no knowledge, which is simply injurious. We are braced up enthusiastically for a little, and then do nothing. At the end of it all we are not better, we are only exhausted. This is the reason why

biography-hunters often, after long dogging the footsteps of greatness, find that they are perhaps no further on the road to it themselves, but rather more inclined than before to lie down where they were.

But Paul explicitly announces to us the working principle of his life. If the lines are great lines, there is nothing mysterious about them. If we want to live like Paul, we have simply to live for Christ; Christ our life on one side, our life for Christ on the other, and both summed up together in Paul's epitome: "To me to live is Christ."

This being the clue to Paul's life, the instructive question next arises, What exactly did Paul mean by this principle, and how did he come to find it out? But the question, "What is this object of life?" is so closely bound up with how Paul came to have this object of life, that the answer to the last question will form at once an explanation and an illustration of the first.

Therefore let us go at once for the answer to the life itself. Great principles are always best and freshest when studied from the life, and it so happens that a circumstance in Paul's life makes it peculiarly easy to act on this rule here.

That circumstance was that Paul had *two* lives. Many men besides Paul have had two lives, but the line is cleaner cut in Paul's case than in almost any biography we have.

Both lives were somewhere about the same

length, so far as we know, but so distinct in their general features and details that Paul had not only two lives, but, as if to mark the distinction more strikingly, two *names*. Let us look for a moment at the first of these lives — the reason will appear presently.

Paul's first life, as we all know, was spent under the most auspicious circumstances, and for certain reasons it will be worth while running over it. Born of a family which belonged to the most select theological school of that day, the son was early looked upon as at once the promise of his parents and the hope of their religion. They sent him when a mere lad to Jerusalem, and enrolled him as a student in the most distinguished college of the time. After running a brilliant college career, and sitting for many years at the feet of the greatest learning the Jewish capital could boast, we find him bursting upon the world with his splendid talents, and taking a place at once in the troubled political movements of the day. It was impossible for such a character with his youth's enthusiasm and a Pharisee's pride to submit to the tame life of a temple Rabbi, and he sees his opportunity in the rise of the Christian sect. Here, at last, he would match his abilities in a contest which would gain him at once a field of exercise and a name. So far, doubtless, he thought his first life *great*.

Into his work of persecution he seems to have next entered with all an inquisitor's zest. His

conspicuous place among the murderers of the first martyr stamped him at once as a leader, and gave him the first taste of a popularity which, but for the interruption of the hand of God, had ended perhaps disastrously to the struggling Christian Church. His success as an inquisitor is recognised in the highest quarters of the land; and the young man's fortune is made. No young man of that time perhaps had such prospects now as Saul. "He was a man raised up for the emergency," said all Jerusalem, and henceforth the Jewish world was at his feet. Courted as the rising man of his day and flushed with success, he leaves no stone unturned to find fresh opportunities of adding to his influence and power. And as he climbed each rung of the ladder of fame, we can imagine, as a great student of Paul has said, how his heart swelled within him as he read these words at night from the Book of Wisdom: "I shall have estimation among the multitude, and honour with the elders, though I be young. I shall be found of a quick conceit in judgment, and shall be admired in the sight of great men. When I hold my tongue they shall abide my leisure, and when I speak they shall give good ear unto me." Such was the man who said, "To me to live is Christ."

Upon the little Church at Jerusalem he has already wreaked his vengeance to the full. The town and neighbourhood at last are well nigh ridded of the pest, and, an unlooked-for calam-

ity, in the height of his triumph Saul finds his occupation gone. Dispersed in all directions, members of the little band have found their way in secret through Judæa and Samaria, through Syria and Phœnicia, even into strange cities. And Paul finds round about Jerusalem no fuel to feed the martyrs' fire or add more lustre to his name.

But there is no pause in the pursuit of human fame. The young lawyer's reputation can never end in an anti-climax like this. And with the ambition which knows not how to rest, and in the pride of his Pharisee's heart, he strikes out the idea to reverse the maxim of the crucified Leader of the hated sect, and go into all the world and suppress the gospel in every creature. He applies to the high-priest for commission and authority, and, breathing out threatenings and slaughter, the man who is going to live for Christ starts out on his Christless mission to make havoc of the Church.

This is the last act of Paul's first life. Let us note it carefully. We are on the bridge which separates Paul's two lives. What marks the transition is this: up to this time his life has been spent in public. It has been one prolonged whirl of excitement and applause. But no sooner have the gates of Jerusalem closed upon him than Paul begins to think. The echoes of the people's praises have died away one by one. He has gone out into the great desert. It is strangely

silent and soothing, and the lull has come at last upon his soul. It is a long time, perhaps, since he has had time to *think;* but Saul was far too great a man to live long an unthinking life. His time for reflection has come. And as he wanders with his small escort along the banks of the Jordan or through the solitary hills of Samaria, his thoughts are busy with the past. And if Saul was far too great a man to live an unthinking life, he was also too great a man to think well of his life when he did think. Each new day as he journeyed away from the scene of his triumph, and looked back upon it all from that distance — which always gives the true perspective to man's life — his mind must have filled with many a sad reproach. And as he lay down at night in the quiet wilderness his thoughts must often have turned on the true quality of the life to which he was sacrificing his talents and his youth. With his quick perception, with his keen trained intellect, with his penetration, he must have seen that after all this life was a mistake. Minds of lesser calibre in the applauding world which he had left had told him he was great. Now, in his calmer moments, he knew he was not great. The eternal heavens stretching above him pointed to an infinity which lay behind it all; and the stars and the silence spoke to him of God. And he felt that his life was miserably small. Saul's thoughts were greater than Saul's life. How he had been living beneath himself — how he had wasted the

precious years of his youth — how he had sold his life for honour and reputation, and bartered the talents God had given him for a name, he must have seen. He had been dazzled, and that was all. He had nothing really to show for his life, nothing that would stand the test of solid thought. It was all done for himself. He, Saul of Tarsus, the rising man of his time, was the centre of it all. "After all," perhaps he cried in agony, "To me to live is Saul," "To me to live is Saul."

Paul's first great discovery, as we have seen — and it is the discovery which precedes every true reformation of life — was the discovery of himself. When Paul said, "To me to live is *myself*," his conversion was begun. There was no retreat then for a man like him. He was too great to have such a little centre to his life; or, rather, he felt life too great to be absorbed with even such a personality as his.

But the next element in the case was not so easily discovered, and it is of much more importance than the first. His first achievement was only to discover himself. His second was to discover some one better than himself. He wanted a new centre to his life — where was he to find it? The unseen hand which painted his own portrait in its true colours on the dark background of his mind had painted every other life the same. The high priests at Jerusalem, the members of the Sanhedrim, his own father at

Tarsus — all the men he knew were living lives like himself. They were no better — most of them worse. Must the old centre of Paul's life remain there still? Is there nothing better in all the world than himself?

It may be conjecture, or it may be nearer truth, that while such questionings passed through the mind of Paul, there came into his thoughts as he journeyed some influences from a life — a life like that for which his thoughts had longed. Paul's best known journeys are his missionary tours, and we generally associate him in our thoughts with the countries of Asia and Italy and Greece. But this time his way leads through the holy land. He has entered the land of Christ. He is crossing the very footsteps of Jesus. The villages along his route are fragrant still with what Jesus said and did. They are not the bitter things that Saul had heard before. Kind words are repeated to him, and tender acts which Jesus did are told. The peasants by the wayside and the shepherds on the hills are full of stories of a self-denying life which used to pass that way a year or two ago, but now will come no more. And the mothers at the cottage doors remember the stranger who suffered their little children to come unto Him, and got them to repeat to Saul, perhaps, the children's blessing which He left behind. Perhaps, in passing through Samaria, the traveller met a woman at a well, who tells her strange tale for the thou-

sandth time, of a weary man who had sat there once and said He was the Christ. And Galilee and Capernaum, and Bethsaida, and the lake shore at Gennesaret, are full of memories of the one true life which surely even then had begun to cast a sacred influence over Paul. At all events, there seemed a strange preparedness in his mind for the meeting on the Damascus road, as if the interview with Jesus then was not so much the first of his friendship as the natural outcome of something that had gone before. And no doubt the Spirit's silent working had been telling on his mind during all these quiet days, leading up his thoughts to the revelation that was to come, and preparing a pathos for the memorable question, with its otherwise unaccountable emphasis, "Why persecutest thou *Me?*"

What went on between Paul's heart and God we do not know. We do not know how deep repentance ran, nor where, nor how, the justifying grace came down from heaven to his soul. Whether just then he went through our formula of conversion — the process which we like to watch and describe in technical words — we do not know. But we know this — there came a difference into his life. His life was changed. It was changed at its most radical part. He had changed centres. During the process, whatever it was, this great transfer was effected. Paul deliberately removed the old centre from his

life, and put a new one in its place. Instead of "to me to live is Paul," it was now, "to me to live is Christ."

Of course, when the centre of Paul's life was changed, he had to take his whole life to pieces and build it up again on a totally different plan. This change, therefore, is not a mere incident in a man's life. It is a revolution, a revolution of the most sweeping sort. There never was a life so filled up with anti-Christian thoughts and impulses brought so completely to a halt. There never was such a total eclipse of the most brilliant worldly prospects, nor such an abrupt transition from a career of dazzling greatness to humble and obscure ignominy.

Let those who define conversion as a certain colourless experience supposed to go on in the *feelings*, blind themselves to the real transition in this life if they will. Let them ask themselves if there ever was a more sweeping revolution in any life, for any cause, than in Paul's, when he abandoned himself, literally abandoned himself, and subordinated everything, and evermore, to this one supreme passion — "to live for Christ."

The stages by which this transcendent standpoint is to be reached are plainly now before us. They are, the discovery of self and the discovery of Christ. These two discoveries between them exhaust the whole of life. *Till* these discoveries are made, no man truly lives till *both* are

made — for many discover themselves who have not yet discovered Christ. But he that hath not the Son hath not *life*. Whatever he has, *existence*, *continuity*, he has not *life*. The condition of living at all is to live for Christ. "He that hath the Son," and he alone, and no one else, "hath life."

Paul takes special care indeed that we should fully understand the altogether different quality of the two lives which a man may live. In his view, the first life, the ordinary life of men, was altogether a mistake. "What things were gain to me," then, he tells us, "I count loss for Christ." That brilliant career of his was loss; that mission, noble and absorbing once, was mere waste energy and misspent time. And he goes further still. His life *was* death. It was selfishness pure and simple; it was the carnal mind pure and simple; and to be carnally minded is *death*. We shall understand the theology of these letters better if we think of the writer as a man escaping *death*. And with this horrible background to his life we can see the fuller significance of his words, that for him to live was Christ.

Another thing is also made plain to us.

The ceaseless demand of the New Testament for *regeneration* is also plain to us when we study the doctrine in such a life as this. It was not Saul who wrote the letters; it was a different man altogether — Paul. It was one who was in

a totally different world from the other. If it *was* Saul, he must have been *born again* before he could have done it. Nothing *less* could account for it. His interests were new, his standpoint, his resources, his friendships. *All* old things, in fact, had passed away. *All* things had become new. In a word, he was a *new* creature. The pool, polluted and stagnant, had found its way at last into the wide, pure sea ; the spirit, tired of its narrow prison, disgusted with ambition which ended with itself, reaches out to the eternal freedom, and finds a worthy field of exercise in the great enterprise of Christ.

There is one class, finally, to whom this biography of Paul has a special message. The people who need Paul's change most are not those, always, who are most thought to need it. The really difficult cases — to others, but especially to themselves — are the people who cannot see really that their life could be much better. There are thousands who do not see exactly what conversion could do to them. And their great difficulty in changing their life has just been this: "What, after all, should we really have to change? Our lives at present can *scarcely* be distinguished from the real Christians around us. Had we been irreligious, or profane, or undutiful, or immoral, conversion might do something for us; but we belong to the class who feel how well we have been brought

up, how much our interests are gathered round religion, and, generally, how circumspect and proper our entire outward life has been. We do not really see, indeed, what change conversion could make." Now this is a class who seldom get any sympathy, and none deserve it more. Religious people and religious books are always saying hard things of the "religiously brought up" — bitterly hard and undeserved things — until they almost come to feel as if their goodness were a crime. But there are secret rendings of the heart within these ranks — longings after God perhaps purer than anywhere else outside God's true family. And there are those who feel the difficulty of changing in surroundings so Christian-like as theirs; who feel it so keenly that their despair sometimes leads them to the dark thought of almost envying the prodigal and the open sinner, who seem to have more chance of finding the kingdom than they.

Now the change in Paul's life is exactly the case in point for them. Paul himself was one of these characters who wonder what use conversion could ever be to them. He was one of the "religiously brought up." Touching the law he was blameless. There was no stricter man with his religion in all Jerusalem than Saul; no man took his place more regularly in the temple, or kept the Sabbath with more scrupulous care. Touching the law he was blameless — just the man you

would have said who never *would* be changed, who was far too good to be susceptible of a change. But this is the man — not far from the kingdom of God, as every one thought him to be — who found room in his most religious heart for the most sweeping reform that ever occurred in a life.

Let those who really do not know very well what religion could do for them take a little quiet thought like Paul. Let them look once more, not at the circumference, but at the centre of their life. Let them ask one question about it: "*Is it Christ?*" There is no middle way in religion — *self* or *Christ*. The quality of the selfishness — intellectual, literary, artistic — the fact that our self's centre may be of a superior order of self, does nothing to destroy this grave distinction. It is between *all* self and Christ. For the matter of that no centre could have been more disciplined or cultured than Paul's. In its place it was truly great and worthy, but its place was anywhere else than where Paul had it for the full half of his life. This question, then, of centres is the vital question. "To me to live is" — what? "To me to live is myself!" Suppose that it is so. What kind of an end to a life is this? How much nobler a centre our life is worthy of — our one life — which is to live for evermore; which is to live with a great centre or a mean one — meanly or greatly for evermore! Think of living with oneself for

ever and for ever. Think of having lived, living now, and evermore, living only for this. Consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners for our sake, who made Himself of no reputation, who gave up form and comeliness; who humbled Himself and emptied Himself for us. Then look with complacency on such a life if we can —

> "I lived for myself, I thought for myself,
> For myself, and none beside,
> Just as if Jesus had never lived,
> As if he had never died."

2. This leads naturally to the other point — the discovery of Christ. And here once more we draw abundant encouragement from our biography of Paul. And it brings us not only to a hopeful thought, but to a very solemn thought. *We have all in some way made the discovery of Christ* — we know more about Christ than Paul did when he became a Christian. When he made Him the centre of his life, he knew less of Him perhaps than most of us. It is a startling truth, at all events, that we are as near the centre of life — the centre of the universe — as Paul. We have heard of Him from our infancy; the features of His life are as familiar as our own; we have no hatred to Him as Paul had once. And if the few days' quietness in the Holy Land, which Paul had on the threshold of his change, were in any way a preparation for the crisis of his life, how much more has our past life been a prepara-

tion for a change in ours! We call Paul's change a sudden conversion — we do not know how sudden it was. But if our life was changed to-day, it would be no sudden conversion. Our whole past has been leading up to these two discoveries of life. Our preparation, so far as knowledge of the new centre goes, is complete. The change, so far as that is concerned, might happen *now*. We have the responsibility of being so near eternal life as that.

The question comes to be then, finally, simply a question of transfer. To me to live is myself, or to me to live is Christ. To live for Christ is not simply the sublime doctrine which it includes of *Christ our life*. It is not so much Christ our life, but rather *our life for Christ*.

Shall it be, then, our life for Christ? "To me to live is Christ." Contrast it with all the other objects of life; take all the centres out of all the great lives, and compare them one by one. Can you match the life-creed of Paul — "to me to live is Christ"?

"To me to live is — *business*," "to me to live is — pleasure," "to me to live is — myself." We can all tell in a moment what our religion is really worth. "To me to live is" — *what?* *What* are we living for? What rises naturally to our heart when we press it with a test like this: "To me to live is" — what? First thoughts, it is said, are best in matters of conscience. What was the first thought that came into our hearts just then?

What word trembled first on our lip just now — "to me to live is" — was it business, was it money, was it ourself, was it Christ?

"To me to live is — business," "to me to live is pleasure," "to me to live is myself." What kind of an end to an immortal life is this? How much nobler a centre our life is worthy of — our life, our one precious life, which is to live for evermore; which is to live with a great centre or a mean one — meanly or greatly for evermore.

The time will come when we shall ask ourselves why we ever crushed this infinite substance of our life within these narrow bounds, and centred that which lasts for ever on what must pass away. In the perspective of eternity all lives will seem poor, and small, and lost, and self-condemned beside a life for Christ. There will be plenty then to gather round the Cross. But who will do it now? Who will do it now? There are plenty men to die for Him, there are plenty to spend eternity with Christ; but where is the man who will *live* for Christ? Death and Eternity in their place. Christ wants *lives*. No fear about death being gain if we have lived for Christ. So let it be. "To me to live is Christ." There is but one alternative — the putting on of Christ; Paul's alternative, the discovery of Christ. We have all in some sense, indeed, already made the discovery of Christ. We may be as near it now as Paul when he left Jerusalem. There was no notice given that he was to change masters. The new Master simply crossed

his path one day, and the great change was come. How often has He crossed our path? We know what to do the next time: we know how our life can be made worthy and great — how only; we know how death can become gain — how only. Many, indeed, tell us death will be gain. Many long for life to be done that they may rest, as they say, in the quiet grave. Let no cheap sentimentalism deceive us. Death can only be gain when to have lived was Christ.

NUMBER VI

Clairvoyance

"*We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*" — 2 COR. iv. 18.

"*Everything that is is double.*"

HERMES TRISMEGISTUS.

"LOOK not at the things which are seen." How can we look not at the things which are seen? If they are *seen*, how can we help looking at them? "Look at the things which are not seen." How can we look at things which are not seen? Has religion some magic wishing-cap, making the solid world invisible, or does it supply some strange clairvoyance power, seeing that which is unseen?

This is one of these alluring paradoxes which all great books delight in, which baffle thought while courting it, but which disclose to whomever picks the lock the rarest and profoundest truth.

The surface meaning of a paradox is either nonsense, or it is false. In this case it is false. One would gather, at first sight, that we had here another of these attacks upon the world, of which the Bible is supposed to be so fond. It

reads as a withering contrast between the things of time and the things of eternity — as an unqualified disparagement of this present world. The things which are seen are temporal — nowhere, not worth a moment's thought, not even to be looked at.

In reality this is neither the judgment of the Bible nor of reason.

There are four reasons why we *should* look at the things which are seen: —

1. First, *because God made them.* Anything that God makes is worth looking at. We live in no chance world. It has been all thought out. Everywhere work has been spent on it lavishly — thought and work — loving thought and exquisite work. All its parts together, and every part separately, are stamped with skill, beauty, and purpose. As the mere work of a Great Master we are driven to look — deliberately and long — at the things which are seen.

2. But, second, *God made me to look at them.* He who made light made the eye. It is a gift of the Creator *on purpose* that we may look at the things which are seen. The whole mechanism of man is made with reference to the temporal world — the eye for seeing it, the ear for hearing it, the nerve for feeling it, the muscle for moving about on it and getting more of it. He acts contrary to his own nature who harbours even a suspicion of the things that are seen.

3. But again, thirdly, God has not merely made

the world, but *He has made it conspicuous.* So far from lying in the shade, so far from being constituted to escape observation, the whole temporal world *clamours* for it. Nature is never and nowhere silent. If you are apathetic, if you will not look at the things which are seen, they will summon you. The bird will call to you from the tree-top, the sea will change her mood for you, the flower looks up appealingly from the wayside, and the sun, before he sets with irresistible colouring, will startle you into attention. The Creator has determined that, whether He be seen or no, no living soul shall tread His earth without being spoken to by these works of His hands. God has secured that. And even those things which have no speech nor language, whose voice is not heard, have their appeal going out to all the world, and their word to the end of the earth. Had God feared that the visible world had been a mere temptation to us, He would have made it less conspicuous. Certainly He has warned us not to love it, but nowhere not to look at it.

4. The last reason, fourthly, is the greatest of all. Hitherto we have been simply dealing with facts. Now we come to a principle. Look at the things that are seen, because it is only by looking at the things that are seen *that we can have any idea of the things that are unseen.* Our whole conception of the eternal is derived from the temporal.

Take any unseen truth, or fact, or law. The proposition is that it can only be apprehended by us by means of the seen and temporal. Take the word *eternal* itself. What do we know of eternity? Nothing that we have not learned from the temporal. When we try to realise that word there rises up before us the spaceless sea. We glide swiftly over it day after day, but the illimitable waste recedes before us, knowing no end. On and on, week and month, and there stretches the same horizon vague and infinite, the far-off circle we can never reach. We stop. We are far enough. This is eternity!

In reality this is not eternity; it is mere water, the temporal, liquid and tangible. But by looking at this thing which is seen we have beheld the unseen. Here is a river. It is also water. But its different shape mirrors a different truth. As we look, the opposite of eternity rises up before us. There is Time, swift and silent; or Life, fleeting and irrevocable. So one might run over all the material of his thoughts, all the groundwork of his ideas, and trace them back to things that are temporal. They are really *material*, made up of matter, and in order to *think* at all, one must first of all *see*.

Nothing could illustrate this better, perhaps, than the literary form of our English Bible. Leaving out for the present the language of symbol and illustration which Christ spoke, there is no great eternal truth that is not borne to us

upon some material image. Look, for instance, at its teaching about human life. To describe that it does not even use the words derived from the temporal world. It brings us face to face with the temporal world, and lets us abstract them for ourselves. It never uses the word "*fleeting*" or "*transitory*." It says life is a vapour that appeareth for a little and vanisheth away. It likens it to a swift post, a swift ship, a tale that is told.

It never uses the word "*irrevocable*." It speaks of water spilt on the ground that cannot be gathered up again — a thread cut by the weaver. Nor does it tell us that life is "*evanescent*." It suggests evanescent things — a dream, a sleep, a shadow, a shepherd's tent removed. And even to convey the simpler truth that life is short, we find only references to short things that are seen — a handbreadth, a pilgrimage, a flower, a weaver's shuttle. The Bible in these instances is not trying to be poetical: it is simply trying to be true. And it distinctly, unconsciously recognises the fact that truth can only be borne into the soul through the medium of things. We must refuse to believe, therefore, that we are not to look at the things which are seen. It is a necessity; for the temporal is the husk and framework of the eternal. And the things which are not seen are made of the things which do appear. "All visible things," said Carlyle, "are emblems. What thou seest is not there on its

own account; strictly speaking, is not there at all. Matter exists only spiritually, and to represent some idea and body it forth" (*Sartor Resartus*, p. 49). And so John Ruskin: — "The more I think of it I find this conclusion more impressed upon me — that the greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to *see* something, and tell what it *saw* in a plain way. Hundreds of people can talk for one who can think; but thousands can think for one who can see. To see clearly is poetry, prophecy, and religion — all in one."

II. From this point we can now go on from the negative of the paradox to the second and positive term — "Look at the things which are not seen." We now understand how to do this. Where is the eternal? Where are the unseen things, that we may look at them? And the answer is — *in the temporal.* Look then at the temporal, but do not pause there. You must penetrate it. Go through it, and see its shadow, its spiritual shadow, on the further side. Look upon this shadow long and earnestly, till that which you look through becomes the shadow, and the shadow merges into the reality. Look through till the thing you look through becomes dim, then transparent, and then invisible, and the unseen beyond grows into form and strength. For, truly, the first thing seen is the shadow, the thing on the other side the reality. The thing you see is only a solid, and men mistake

solidity for reality. But that alone is the reality — the eternal which lies behind. Look, then, not at the things which are seen, but look through them to the things that are unseen.

The great lesson which emerges from all this is as to the religious use of the temporal world. Heaven lies behind earth. We see that this earth is not merely a place to live in, but to see in. We are to pass through it as clairvoyants, holding the whole temporal world as a vast transparency, through which the eternal shines.

Let us now apply this principle briefly to daily life. To most of us, the most practical division of life is threefold: the Working life, the Home life, and the Religious life. What do these yield us of the eternal, and how?

1. *The Working Life.* To most men, work is just work — manual work, professional work, office work, household work, public work, intellectual work. A yellow primrose is just a yellow primrose; a ledger is a ledger; a lexicon is a lexicon. To a worker, Christian business man, with this mind, so far as spiritual uses are concerned, therefore, work is vanity — an unaccountable squandering of precious time. He must earn his success by the sweat of his brow; that is all he knows about it. It is a curse, lying from the beginning upon man as man. So, six days of it each week, he bends his neck to it doggedly; the seventh God allows him to think about the unseen and eternal.

Now God would never unspiritualise three-fourths of man's active life by work, if work were work, and nothing more.

A second workman sees a little further. His work is not a curse exactly; it is his appointed life, his destiny. It is God's will for him, and he must go through with it. No doubt its trials are good for him; at all events, God has appointed him this sphere, and he must accept it with Christian resignation.

It is a poor compliment to the Divine arrangements if they are simply to be acquiesced in. The all-wise God surely intends some higher outcome from three-fourths of life than ailment and resignation.

To the spiritual man, next, there lies behind this temporal a something which explains all. He sees more to come out of it than the year's income, or the employment of his allotted time, or the benefiting of his species. If violins were to be the only product, there is no reason why Stradivarius should spend his life in making them. But work is an incarnation of the unseen. In this loom man's soul is made. There is a subtle machinery behind it all, working while he is working, making or unmaking the unseen in him. Integrity, thoroughness, honesty, accuracy, conscientiousness, faithfulness, patience — these unseen things which complete a soul are woven into it in work. Apart from work, these things are not. As the conductor

leads into our nerves the invisible electric force, so work conducts into our spirit all high forces of character, all essential qualities of life, truth in the inward parts. Ledgers and lexicons, business letters, domestic duties, striking of bargains, writing of examinations, handling of tools— these are the conductors of the eternal. So much the conductors of the eternal, that without them there is no eternal. No man *dreams* integrity, accuracy, and so on. He cannot learn them by reading about them. These things require their wire as much as electricity. The spiritual fluids and the electric fluids are under the same law; and messages of grace come along the lines of honest work to the soul like the invisible message along the telegraph wires. Patience, spiritually, will travel along a wire as really as electricity.

A workshop, therefore, or an office, or a school of learning, is a gigantic conductor. An office is not a place for making money — it is a place for making character. A workshop is not a place for making machinery — it is a place for making men: not for turning wood, for fitting engines, for founding cylinders. To God's eye, it is a place for founding character; it is a place for fitting in the virtues to one's life, for turning out honest, modest-tempered God-fearing men. A school of learning is not so much a place for making scholars, as a place for making souls, and he who would ripen and perfect the eternal element in his being will do so by at-

tending to the religious uses of his daily task, recognising the unseen in its seen, so turning three-fourths of each day's life into an ever-acting means of grace.

We say some kinds of work are immoral. A man who is turning out careless, imperfect work, is turning out a careless, imperfect character for himself. He is touching deceit every moment; and this unseen thing rises up from his work like a subtle essence, and enters and poisons his soul. We say piece-work is immoral — it makes a man only a piece of a man, shuts him out from variety, and originality, and adaptation, narrowing and belittling his soul. But we forget the counter-truth, that honest and good work make honesty and goodness, integrity and thoroughness — nay, that these alone make them. And that he who would ripen and perfect his soul must attend to the religious uses of his daily work, — seeing the unseen in its seen, — heeding it, not with a dry punctiliousness, but lovingly, so turning the active life of each working day into means of grace, recognising its dignity, not as a mere making of money, but as an elaborate means of grace, occupying three-fourths of life.

2. *The Family Life.* Next, life is so ordered that another large part of it is spent in the family. This also, therefore, has its part to play in the completing of the soul. The working life could never teach a man all the lessons of the unseen. A whole set of additional mes-

sages from the eternal have to be conducted into his soul at home. This is why it is not good for a man to be alone. A lonely man is insulated from the eternal — inaccessible to the subtle currents which ought to be flowing hourly into his soul.

This, too, is a higher source of spirituality than work. It is here that life dawns, and the first mould is given to the plastic substance — Home is the cradle of Eternity.

It has been secured, therefore, that the first laws stamped there, the first lines laid down, the permanent way for the future soul, should be at once the lines of the eternal. Why do all men say that the family is a divine institution? Because God instituted it? But what guided Him in constituting it as it is? Eternity. Home is a preliminary heaven. Its arrangements are purely the arrangements of Heaven. Heaven is a father with his children. The parts we shall play in that great home are just the parts we have learned in the family here. We shall go through the same life there — only without the matter. This matter is a mere temporary quality to practise the eternal on — as wooden balls are hung up in a schoolroom to teach the children numbers till they can think them for themselves.

When a parent wishes to teach his child form and harmony, the properties of matter, beauty, and symmetry — all these unseen things — what does he do but give his child things that are

seen, through which he can see them? He gives him a box of matter, bricks of wood, as playthings, and the child, in forming and transforming these, in building with them lines and squares, arches and pillars, has borne into his soul regularity and stability, form and symmetry. So God with us. The material universe is a mere box of bricks. We exercise our growing minds upon it for a space, till in the hereafter we become men, and childish things are put away. The temporal is but the scaffolding of the eternal; and when the last immaterial souls have climbed through this material to God, the scaffolding shall be taken down, and the earth dissolved with fervent heat — not because it is wrong, but because its work is done.

The mind of Christ is to be learned in the family. Strength of character may be acquired at work, but beauty of character is learned at home. There the affections are trained — that love especially which is to abide when tongues have ceased and knowledge fails. There the gentle life reaches us, the true heaven life. In one word, the family circle is the supreme conductor of Christianity. Tenderness, humbleness, courtesy; self-forgetfulness, faith, sympathy — these ornaments of a meek and quiet spirit are learned at the fireside, round the table, in commonplace houses, in city streets. We are each of us daily embodying these principles in our soul, or trampling them out of it, in the ordinary intercourse

of life. As actors in a charade, each member of the house each day, consciously or unconsciously, acts a word. The character is the seen, the word the unseen, and whether he thinks of the word at night or not, the souls of all around have guessed it silently; and when the material mask and costume is put away, and the circumstance of that day's life long years forgotten, that word of eternity lives on to make or mar the player, and all the players with him, in that day's game of life.

To waken a man to all that is involved in each day's life, in even its insignificant circumstance and casual word and look, surely you have but to tell him all this — that in these temporals lie eternals; that in life, not in church, lies religion; that all that is done or undone, said or unsaid, of right or wrong, have their part, by an unalterable law, in the eternal life of all.

3. We now come to Religion. And we shall see further how God has put even that for us into the temporal. Reflect for a moment upon the teaching of Christ. All that He had to say of the eternal He put up in images of the temporal world. What are all His parables, His allusions to nature, His illustrations from real life, His metaphors and similes, but disclosures to our blind eyes of the unseen in the seen? In reality, the eternal is never nearer us than in a material image. *Reason* cannot bring religion near us, only *things* can. So Christ never *demonstrated* anything. He did not appeal to the reasoning power in man, but to the

seeing power — that power of imagination which deals with images of things.

That is the key to all Christ's teaching — that He spoke not to the reason but to the imagination. Incessantly He held up *things* before our eyes — things which in a few days or years would moulder into dust — and told us to look there at the eternal. He held up bread. "I am bread," He said. And if you think over that for a lifetime, you will never get nearer to the truth than through that thing bread. That temporal is so perfect an image of the eternal, that no reading, or thinking, or sermonising, can get us closer to Christ.

Hence the triumphant way in which He ransacked the temporal world, and marked off for us — what we, with our false views of spirituality, had never dared — marked off for us all its common and familiar things as mirrors of the eternal. So light, life; vine, wine; bread, water, physician, shepherd, and a hundred others, have all become transformed with a light from the other world. Observe, Christ does not say He is *like* these things, He *is* these things. Look through these things, right through, and you will see Him. We disappoint our souls continually in trying, by some other way than through these homely temporals, to learn the spiritual life.

It is the danger of those who pursue the intellectual life as a specialty to miss this tender and gracious influence. The student of the family, by a generous though perilous homage paid to

learning, is allowed to be an exception in the family life. He dwells apart, goes his own way, lives his own life; and unconsciously, and to his pain, he finds himself, perhaps, gradually looking down on its homelier tasks and less transcendent interests. In society, it is for the scholar we make allowances; but the eccentricities we condone on account of their high compensations often mark an arrested development of what is really higher. And there is nothing so much to fear in oneself, and to check with more resolute will, than the unconscious tendency in all who pursue culture to get out of step with humanity, and be not at home at home.

A very remarkable instance of Christ's use of this principle is the Sacraments. His design there was to perpetuate, in the most luminous and arresting way, the two grandest facts of the spiritual world. How did He proceed? He made them visible. He associated these facts with the two commonest things in the world — *water* and *bread and wine* — the every-day diet at every peasant's board. By these sacraments, the souls of men are tied down at the most sacred moments of life to the homeliest temporal things; so that the highest spirituality, by Christ's own showing, comes to God's children through lowly forms of the material world. Transcendentalism in religion is a real mistake. True spirituality is to see the divinity in common things.

But, yet again, there is a more wonderful ex-

hibition of this law than the Sacraments. God furnished the world with a temporal thing for every eternal thing save one. Every eternal truth had its material image in the world — every eternal law had its working-model among the laws of nature. But there was one thing wanting. There was no temporal for the eternal God Himself. And man missed it. He wished to see even this unseen in something seen. In the sea, he saw eternity; in space, infinity; in the hills, sublimity; in the family, love; in the state, law. But there was no image of God. One speaks of what follows with bated breath. *God gave it!* God actually gave it! God made a seen image of Himself — not a vision, not a metaphor — an express image of His person. He laid aside His invisibility, He clothed *Himself* with the temporal, *He* took flesh and dwelt among us. The incarnation was the eternal become temporal for a little time, that we might look at it.

It was our only way of beholding it, for we can only see the unseen in the seen. The word "God" conveyed no meaning; there was no seen thing to correspond to that word, and no word is intelligible till there is an image for it. So God gave religion its new word in the intelligible form — a word in flesh — that, henceforth, all men might behold God's glory, not in itself, for that is impossible, but in the face of Jesus. This is the crowning proof of the religious use of the temporal world.

Such, then, are some of the eternal uses of the temporal world.

Three classes of men, finally, have taken up their position with reference to this principle within recent years.

One will not look at the unseen at all — the materialist. He is utterly blind to the eternal. The second is utterly blind to the temporal — the mystic. He does not look for the unseen in the seen, but apart from the seen. He works, or tries to work, by direct vision. The third is neither blind to the unseen or the seen, but short-sighted to both. The Ritualist selects some half-dozen things from the temporal world, and tries to see the unseen in them. As if there were only some half-dozen things — crosses and vestments, music and stained glass — through which the eternal shone! The whole world is a ritual — that is the answer. If a man means to evade God, let him look for Him in some half-dozen forms; he *will* evade Him, he will not see Him anywhere else. But let him who wishes to get near God, and be with God always, move in a religious atmosphere always; let him take up his position beside this truth. Worldliness has been defined as a looking at the things that are seen, but *only closely enough to see their market value.* Spirituality is that further look which sees their eternal value, which realises that

> "The earth is full of heaven,
> And every common bush afire with God."

NUMBER VII

The Three Facts of Sin

> "*Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;*
> *Who healeth all thy diseases;*
> *Who redeemeth thy life from destruction.*"
>
> Ps. ciii. 3, 4.

THERE is one theological word which has found its way lately into nearly all the newer and finer literature of our country. It is not only *one* of the words of the literary world at present, it is perhaps *the* word. Its reality, its certain influence, its universality, have at last been recognised, and in spite of its theological name have forced it into a place which nothing but its felt relation to the wider theology of human life could ever have earned for a religious word. That word, it need scarcely be said, is *Sin.*

Even in the lighter literature of our country, and this is altogether remarkable, the ruling word just now is *sin.* Years ago it was the gay term *Chivalry* which held the foreground in poem and ballad and song. Later still, the word which held court, in novel and romance, was *Love.* But now a deeper word heads the chapters and begins the cantos. A more exciting thing than chivalry is descried in the arena, and love itself fades in

interest before this small word, which has wandered out of theology, and changed the face of literature, and made many a new book preach.

It is not for religion to complain that her vocabulary is being borrowed by the world. There may be pulpits where there are not churches; and it is a valuable discovery for religion that the world has not only a mind to be amused but a conscience to be satisfied.

But religion has one duty in the matter — when her words are borrowed, to see that they are borrowed *whole*. Truth which is to pass into such common circulation must not be mutilated truth; it must be strong, wringing, decided, whole; it must be standard truth; in a word, it must be Bible truth.

Now the Bible truth about this word is in itself interesting and very striking. In David especially, where the delineations are most perfect and masterful, the reiteration and classification of the great facts and varieties of sin form one of the most instructive and impressive features of the sacred writings. The Psalms will ever be the standard work on Sin — the most ample analysis of its nature, its effects, its shades of difference, and its cure.

And yet, though it is such a common thing, I daresay many of us, perhaps, do not know anything about it. Somehow, it is just the common things we are apt not to think about. Take the commonest of all things — air. What do we

know about it? What do we know about water? — that great mysterious sea, on which some of you spend your lives, which moans all the long winter at your very doors. Sin is a commoner thing than them all; deeper than the sea, more subtle than the air; mysterious indeed, moaning in all our lives, through all the winter and summer of our past; that shall last, in the undying soul of man, when there shall be no more sea. To say the least of it, it is most unreasonable that a man should live in sin all his life without knowing in some measure what he is about.

And as regards the higher bearings of the case, it is clear that without the fullest information about sin no man can ever have the fullest information about himself, which he ought to have; and what is of more importance, without understanding sin no man can ever understand God. Even the Christian who has only the ordinary notions of sin *in the general*, can neither be making very much of himself or of his theology, for as a general rule, a man's experience of religion and of grace is in pretty exact proportion to his experience of sin.

No doubt, the intimate knowledge of themselves which the Old Testament writers had, had everything to do with their intimate knowledge of God. David, for instance, who had the deepest knowledge of God, had also the deepest knowledge of his own heart; and if there is one thing in the writings he has left us more conspicuous

than another, it is the ceaseless reiteration of the outstanding facts of Sin — the cause, the effects, the shades of difference, and the cure of Sin.

In the clause which forms our text to-day, David has given us in a nutshell the whole of the main facts of Sin. And for any one who wishes to become acquainted with the great pivots on which all human life turns, and on which his own life turns; for any one who wishes to understand the working of God's grace; for any one who wishes to examine himself on the other great fact of human sin; there is no more admirable summary than these words:

"Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; Who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction."

These facts of sin, which it is necessary for us to know, may be said to be *three* in number:

1. The Guilt of Sin.
2. The Stain of Sin.
3. The Power of Sin.

And these three correspond roughly with the natural division of the text:

1. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities = the Guilt of Sin.

2. Who healeth all thy diseases = the Stain of Sin.

3. Who redeemeth thy life from destruction = the Power of Sin.

The best fact to start with will perhaps be

the *last* of these; and for this reason the word *Life* is in it. "Who redeemeth thy *Life* from destruction."

We have all a personal interest in anything that concerns *life*. We can understand things — even things in theology — if they will only bear upon our life. And to anything which in any way comes home to life, in influencing it, or bettering it, or telling upon it in any way whatever, we are always ready, for our life's sake, to give a patient hearing.

1. We feel prepared to take kindly to almost any doctrine if it will only bear upon our life. And surely in the whole range of truth none have more points of contact with the heart of man than the doctrine of the Power of Sin. In the first place, then, let us notice that Sin is a *Power*, and a power which concerns *Life*.

There is an old poem which bears the curious title of "Strife in Heaven," the idea of which is something like this: The poet supposes himself to be walking in the streets of the New Jerusalem, when he comes to a crowd of saints engaged in a very earnest discussion. He draws near, and listens. The question they are discussing is, Which of them is the greatest monument of God's saving grace. After a long debate, in which each states his case separately, and *each* claims to have been by far the most wonderful trophy of God's love in all the multitude of the redeemed, it is finally agreed to settle the matter

by a vote. Vote after vote is taken, and the list of competition is gradually reduced until only two remain. These are allowed to state their case again, and the company stand ready to join in the final vote. The first to speak is a very old man. He begins by saying that it is a mere waste of time to go any further; it is absolutely impossible that God's grace could have done more for any man in heaven than for him. He tells again how he had led a most wicked and vicious life — a life filled up with every conceivable indulgence, and marred with every crime. He has been a thief, a liar, a blasphemer, a drunkard, and a murderer. On his deathbed, at the eleventh hour, Christ came to him and he was forgiven.

The other is also an old man who says, in a few words, that he was brought to Christ when he was a boy. He had led a quiet and uneventful life, and had looked forward to heaven as early as he could remember.

The vote is taken; and, of course, you would say it results in favour of the first. But no, the votes are all given to the *last*. We might have thought, perhaps, that the one who led the reckless, godless life — he who had lied, thieved, blasphemed, murdered; he who was saved by the skin of his teeth, just a moment before it might have been too late — had the most to thank God for. But the old poet knew the deeper truth. It required great grace verily to pluck that old

brand from the burning. It required depths, absolutely fathomless, depths of mercy to forgive that veteran in sin at the close of all these guilty years. But it required more grace to *keep* that other life from guilt through all these tempted years. It required more grace to save him from the sins of his youth, and keep his Christian boyhood pure, to steer him scathless through the tempted years of riper manhood, to crown his days with usefulness, and his old age with patience and hope. Both started in life together; to one grace came at the end, to the other at the beginning. The first was saved from the guilt of sin, the second from the *power* of sin as well. The first was saved from *dying* in sin. But he who became a Christian in his boyhood was saved from *living* in sin. The one required just one great act of love at the close of life, the other had a life full of love, — it was a greater salvation *far*. His soul was forgiven like the other, but his life was redeemed from destruction.

The lesson to be gathered from the old poet's parable is that sin is a question of power as much as a question of guilt, — that salvation is a question of Life perhaps far more than a question of Death. There is something in every man's life which needs saving from, something which would spoil his life and run off with it into destruction if let alone. This principle of destruction is the first great fact of Sin — its *Power*.

Now any man who watches his life from day to day, and especially if he is trying to steer it towards a certain moral mark which he has made in his mind, has abundant and humiliating evidence that this Power is busily working in *his* life. He finds that this Power is working *against him* in his life, defeating him at every turn, and persistently opposing all the good he tries to do. He finds that his natural bias is to break away from God and good. Then he is clearly conscious that there is an acting ingredient in his soul which not only neutralises the inclination to follow the path which he knows to be straightest and best, but works continually and consistently against his better self, and urges his life onwards towards a broader path which leads to destruction.

Now it was this road which David had in his mind when he thanked God that *his* life had been redeemed, or kept back from destruction. It was a beaten track we may be sure in those times, as it is to-day, and David knew perfectly well when he penned these words that God's hand had veritably saved him from ending his life along that road. It was not enough in summing up his life in his old age, and calling upon his soul to bless the Lord for all His benefits, to thank Him simply for the forgiveness of his sins. God has done far more for him than forgive him his sin. He has redeemed his life from destruction. He has saved him from the

all but omnipotent *power* of Sin. What that power was, what that power might have become, how it might have broken up and wrecked his life a thousand times, let those who remember the times when it did break loose in David's life recall. How little might we have guessed that there was anything in the Psalmist's life to make him thank God at its close for keeping it back from destruction. Brought up in the secluded plains of Bethlehem, and reared in the pure atmosphere of country innocence, where could the shepherd lad get any taint of sin which could develop in after years to a great destroying power? And yet he got it — somehow, he got it. And even in his innocent boyhood, the fatal power lurked there, able enough, willing enough, vicious enough, to burst through the early boundaries of his life and wreck it ere it reached its prime. All the time he was walking with God; all the time he was planning God's temple; all the time he was writing his holy Psalms — which make all men wonder at the Psalmist's grace; while he was playing their grave sweet melody upon his harp in the ear of God, the power of sin was seething and raging in his breast, ready to quench the very inspiration God was giving him, and ruin his religion and his soul for evermore. God kept His hand, we may be sure, through David's life on the springs of David's sin; and there was nothing so much to thank God for, in taking the retrospect of his

eventful course, than that his *life* had been redeemed from this first great fact of sin.

David's salvation, to round off the point with an analogy from the old poet, was a much more wonderful thing than, say, the dying thief's salvation. David cost grace far more than the dying thief. The dying thief only needed dying grace. David needed living grace. The thief only needed forgiving grace; David needed forgiving grace and restraining grace. He needed grace to *keep* in his life, to keep it from running away. But the thief needed no restraining grace. The time for that was past. His life *had* run away. His wild oats were sown, and the harvest was heavy and bitter Destruction had come upon him already in a hundred forms. He had had no antidote to the power of sin, which runs so fiercely in every vein of every man, and he had destroyed himself. His character was ruined, his soul was honey-combed through and through with sin. He could not have joined in David's psalm that his *life* was saved from destruction. His death was, and the wreck of his soul was, but his *life* was lost to God, to the world, and to himself. His *life* had never been redeemed as David's was; so David was the greater debtor to God's grace, and few men have had greater reason than he to praise God in old age for redeeming their life from destruction.

Yes, there is more in salvation than forgive-

ness. And why? Because there is more in sin than guilt. "If I were to be forgiven to-day," men who do not know this say, "I would be as bad as ever to-morrow." It is based on the fallacy, it is based on the heresy, that there is no more for a man in religion than forgiveness of sins. If there were not it would be little use to us. It would have been little use to a man like David. And David's life would have been incomplete, and David's psalm would have been impossible, had he not been able to add to the record of God's pardon the record of God's power in redeeming his life from destruction. "If I were to be forgiven to-day, I would be as bad as ever to-morrow." No, that 's founded on the notion that there 's nothing more in religion than forgiveness. If there were not, I say it with all solemnity, it would be very little use to me. We have all thanked God for the dying thief — have we ever thanked God for redeeming *our* life from destruction? Destruction is the natural destination of every human soul. It is as natural for our soul to go downward as for a stone to fall to the ground. Do we ever thank God for redeeming our soul from that? And when we thank God we are saved, do we mean we are saved from hell, or do we think sometimes how He has rescued our life from the destroying power of sin?

2. *The Stain of Sin.*

The power of sin could never run through a

man's life without leaving its mark behind. Nothing in the world ever works without friction. A mountain torrent digs a glen in the mountain side; the sea cuts a beach along the shore; the hurricane leaves a thousand fallen witnesses behind to mark its track. And the great river of sin, as it rolls through a human life, leaves a pile of ruins here and there as melancholy monuments to show where it has been. Nature, with all its strength, is a wonderfully delicate machine, and everything has its reaction somewhere and some time. Nothing is allowed to pass, and nothing has so appalling a reaction upon every one and everything as sin.

History is an undying monument of human sin. The most prominent thing on its pages are the stains — the stains of sin which time has not rubbed out. The history of the world, for the most part, has been written in the world's blood; and all the reigns of all its emperors and kings will one day be lost in one absorbing record of one great reign — the one long reign of sin. As it has been with history so it is in the world to-day. The surface of society is white with leprosy. Take away the *power* of sin to-morrow, the stain of sin remains. Whatever the world may suffer from want of conviction of the guilt of sin it will never be without conviction of its stain. We see it in one another's lives. We see it in one another's faces. It is the stain of the world's sin that troubles the world's conscience. It is

the stain of the world's sin that troubles philanthropy; that troubles the Parliament of the country; that troubles the Press of the country. It is the stain of the world's sin especially that is making a place in literature for this word sin. It is this side of sin that is absorbing the finest writing of the day; that is filling our modern poetry; that is making a thousand modern books preach the doctrine of Retribution, which simply means the doctrine of the stain of sin. Society cares nothing for thee, is not wise enough to see the power of sin, or religious enough to see the guilt of sin; but it cannot fail to see the stain of sin. It does not care for the power or the guilt of sin; it cares for the stain of sin, because it must. That troubles society. That lies down at its doors, and is an eyesore to it. It is a loathsome thing to be lying there, and society must do something. So this is what it does with it: in one corner it builds a prison — this will rid the world of its annoyance. In another corner it plants a mad-house — the sore may fester there unseen. In another it raises an hospital; in a fourth it lays out a graveyard. Prisons, mad-houses, hospitals — these are just so much roofing which society has put on to hide the stain of sin. It is a good thing in some ways that sin has always its stain. Just as pain is a good thing to tell that something is wrong, so the stain of sin may be a good thing to tell that the power has broken loose. Society might never trouble itself if it were not for the stain.

And in dealing with the stain of sin it sometimes may do a very little to maim its power. But it is a poor, poor remedy. If it could only see the power and try to deal with that — try to get God's grace to act on that, the world might be redeemed from destruction after all. But it only sees the stain when it is too late — the stain which has dropped from the wound after the throat of virtue has been cut. Surely, when the deed is done, it is the least it could do to remove the traces of the crime.

But one need not go to society or history to see the stains of sin. We see it in one another's lives and in our own lives. Our conscience, for instance, is not so quick as it might have been — the stains of sin are there, between us and the light. We have ignored conscience many a time when it spoke, and its voice has grown husky and indistinct. Our intellectual life is not so true as it might have been — our intellectual sins have stained it and spoilt our memory, and taken the edge of our sympathy, and filled us with suspicion and one-sided truths, and destroyed the delicate power of faith.

There are few more touching sights than to see a man in mature life trying to recover himself from the stains of a *neglected* past. The past itself is gone; but it remains in dark accumulated stains upon his life, and he tries to take them off in vain. There was a time once, when his robe was white and clean. "Keep your garment unspotted from

the world," they said to him, the kind home-voices, as he went out into life. He remembers well the first spot on that robe. Even the laden years that lie between have no day so dark — no spot now lies so lurid red upon his soul as that first sin. Then the companion stain came, for sins are mostly twins. Then another, and another, and many more, till count was lost, and the whole robe was patterned over with sin stains. The power of God has come to make a new man of him, but the stains are sunk so deeply in his soul that they are living parts of him still. It is hard for him to give up the world. It is hard for him to be pure. It is hard for him to forget the pictures which have been hanging in the galleries of his imagination all his life — to forget them when he comes to think of God; to forget them when he kneels down to pray; to forget them even when he comes to sit in church. The past of his life has been all against him; and even if his future is religious, it can never be altogether unaffected by the stain of what has been. It is the stain of sin which makes repentance so hard in adult life, which yields the most impressive argument to the young to remember their Creator in their youth. For even "the angels," says Ruskin, "who rejoice over repentance, cannot but feel an uncomprehended pain as they *try* and *try again in vain* whether *they* may not warm hard hearts with the brooding of their kind wings."

But if the stain of sin is invisible in moral and

intellectual life, no one can possibly be blind to it in bodily life. We see it in one another's lives, but more than that, we see it in one another's faces. Vice writes in plain characters, and all the world is its copybook. We can read it everywhere and on everything around, from pole to pole. The drunkard, to take the conspicuous example, so stains his bodily life with his sin that the seeds of disease are sown which, long after he has reformed, will germinate in his death. If all the drunkards in the world were to be changed to-morrow, the stains of sin in their bodies even would doubtless bring a large majority — in a few years, less or more — to what was after all really a drunkard's grave.

There is a physical demonstration of sin as well as a religious; and no sin can come in among the delicate faculties of the mind, or among the coarser fibres of the body, without leaving a stain, either as a positive injury to the life, or, what is equally fatal, as a predisposition to commit the same sin again. This predisposition is always one of the most real and appalling accompaniments of the stain of sin. There is scarcely such a thing as an isolated sin in a man's life. Most sins can be accounted for by what has gone before. Every sin, so to speak, has its own pedigree, and is the result of the accumulated force, which means the accumulated stain of many a preparatory sin.

Thus when Peter began to *swear* in the High

Priest's palace it was probably not the first time Peter swore. A man does not suddenly acquire the habit of uttering oaths; and when it is said of Peter, "Then *began he* to curse and to swear," it does not at all mean by "then" and "began" that he had not begun it long ago. The legitimate inference is, that in the rough days of his fisherman's life, when the nets got entangled perhaps, or the right wind would not blow, Peter had come out many a time with an oath to keep his passion cool. And now, after years of devoted fellowship with Christ, the stain is still so black upon his soul that he curses in the very presence of his Lord. An outbreak which meets the public eye is generally the climax of a series of sins, which discretion has been able, till then, to keep out of sight. The doctrine of the stain of sin has no exceptions; and few men, we may be sure, can do a suddenly notorious wrong without knowing something in private of the series to which it belongs.

But the most solemn fact about this stain of sin is that so little can be done for it. It is almost indelible. There is a very solemn fact about this stain of sin — it can never be altogether blotted out. The guilt of sin may be forgiven, the power of sin may be broken, but the stains of sin abide. When it is said, "He healeth our diseases," it means indeed that we may be healed; but the ravages which sin has left must still remain. Small-pox may be healed, but it leaves its mark behind. A cut limb may be cured, but the scar

remains for ever. An earthquake is over in three minutes, but centuries after the ground is still rent into gulfs and chasms which ages will never close. So the scars of sin, on body and mind and soul, live with us in silent retribution on our past, and go with us to our graves.

And the stain does not stop with *our* lives. Every action of every man has an ancestry and a posterity in other lives. The stains of life have power to spread. The stains of other lives have crossed over into our lives, stains from our lives into theirs. "I am a part," says the Laureate, "of all that I have met." A hundred years hence we all must live again — in thoughts, in tendencies, in influences, perhaps in sins and stains in other lives. The sins of the father shall be visited on the children. The blight on the vicious parent shall be visited on the insane offspring. The stain on the intemperate mother shall reappear in the blasted lives of her drunken family. Finer forms of sin in the same way — of companion on companion, of brother or sister, of teacher and pupil. For God Himself has made the law, that the curse must follow the breach; and even He who healeth our diseases may never interfere with the necessary stain of a sinful life.

"Take my influence," cried a sinful man, who was dying; "take my influence, and bury it with me." He was going to be with Christ, his influence had been against Him; he was leaving it

behind. As a conspirator called by some act of grace to his sovereign's table remembers with unspeakable remorse the assassin whom he left in ambuscade at his king's palace gate, so he recalls the traitorous years and the influences which will plot against his Lord when he is in eternity. Oh, it were worth being washed from sin, were it only to escape the possibility of a treachery like that. It were worth living a holy and self-denying life, were it only to join the choir invisible of those almighty dead who live again in lives made better by our presence.

3. But now, lastly, we come to the third great fact of sin, *its guilt*. And we find ourselves face to face with the greatest question of all, "What has God to say to all this mass of sin?"

Probably every one will acknowledge that his life bears witness to the two first facts of sin. Starting with this admission, a moment's thought lands us in a greater admission. We all acknowledge sin, therefore we must all acknowledge ourselves to be guilty. Whether we feel it or no, guilt is inseparable from sin. Physical evil may make a man sorry, but moral evil makes him guilty. It may not make him *feel* guilty — we are speaking of facts — he *is* guilty. So we are guilty for our past lives. We may be sorry for the past. But it is not enough that we are sorry, we are guilty for the past. We are more than sinners, we are criminals. This is where the literary conception of sin is altogether defective

and must be supplemented. It knows nothing, and can teach nothing, of the guilt of a sinner's soul. It is when we come to God that we learn this. God is our Father, but God is our Judge. And when we know that, our sin takes on a darker colouring. It grows larger than *our* life, and suddenly seems to be infinite. The whole world, the whole universe, is concerned in it. Sin only made us recoil from *ourselves* before; now it makes God recoil from us. We are out of harmony with God. Our iniquities have separated us from God, and in some mysterious way we have come to be answerable to Him. We feel that the Lord has turned and looked upon us as He looked at Peter, and we can only go out and weep bitterly.

If these experiences are foreign to our souls, we must feel our sense of guilt when we come to look at Christ. Christ could not move through the world without the mere spectacle of His life stirring to their very depths the hearts of every one whose path He crossed. And Christ cannot move through the chambers of our thoughts without the dazzling contrast to ourselves startling into motion the sense of burning shame and sin. But, above all, Christ could not die upon the cross without witnessing to all eternity of the appalling greatness of human guilt. And it is the true climax of conviction which the prophet speaks of: "They shall look on Me whom they have pierced, and they shall *mourn*."

This conviction of sin, in this the deepest sense, is not a thing to talk about, but to feel; and when it is felt, it cannot be talked about; it is too deep for words. It comes as an unutterable woe upon the life, and rests there, in dark sorrow and heaviness, till Christ speaks Peace.

Such, in outline, are the three facts of sin. They are useful in two ways: they teach us ourselves, and they teach us God. It is along these three lines that you will find salvation. Run your eye along the first — the power of sin — and you will understand Jesus. Thou shalt call His name Jesus, because He saves His people from their sins. Look at the second — the stain of sin — and you will understand the righteousness of Christ; you will see the need of the one pure life; you will be glad that there has been one who has kept His garment unspotted from the world.

Look at the third, and you will see the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world. You will understand the atonement; you will pray, —

> "Let the water and the blood,
> From Thy riven side which flowed,
> Be of sin the double cure,
> Cleanse me from its guilt and power."

NUMBER VIII

The Three Facts of Salvation

SUPPLEMENT TO
"THE THREE FACTS OF SIN"

> "*Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;*
> *Who healeth all thy diseases;*
> *Who redeemeth thy life from destruction.*"
> Ps. ciii. 3, 4.

LAST Sabbath we were engaged with the three facts of Sin. To-day we come to the three facts of salvation.

The three facts of sin were: —

1. The Guilt of Sin — "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities."

2. The Stain of Sin — "Who healeth all thy diseases."

3. The Power of Sin — "Who redeemeth thy life from destruction."

And now we come to the three facts of salvation — the emphasis on the first words of each clause instead of the last.

1. Who forgiveth. 2. Who healeth. 3. Who redeemeth.

Every one who comes into the world experiences less or more of the three facts of sin; and

every one is allowed to live on in the world mainly that he may also experience the three great facts of salvation. God keeps the most of us alive from day to day with this one object. Sin has got hold of us, and He is giving us time — time for grace to get the upper hand of it, time to work out the three facts of salvation in our lives with fear and trembling against the three facts of sin. Our being, therefore, lies between these two great sets of facts, the dark set and the bright, and life is just the battlefield on which they fight it out. If the bright side win, it is a bright life — saved. If the dark side, it is a dark life — lost.

We have seen how the three dark facts have already begun to work upon our life; and that they are not only working at our life, but sapping it, and preying upon it every hour of the day. And now we stand face to face with the question which is wrung out from our life by the very sin which is destroying it, "What must I do to be saved?"

The first fact about which we would ask this question — to begin once more with the fact which most conspicuously concerns life — is the fact of the Power of Sin. What must I do to be saved from the power of sin? What most of us feel we really want religion to do for us, though it is not the deepest experience, is to save us from something which we feel in our life — a very terrible something which is slowly dragging

our life downward to destruction. This something has gained an unaccountable hold upon us; it seems to make us go wrong whether we will or no, and instead of exhausting itself with all the attempts it has made upon our life in the past, it seems to get stronger and stronger every day. Even the Christian knows that this strange wild force is just at his very door, and if he does not pray to-morrow morning, for instance, before the day is out it will have wrought some mischief in his life. If he does not pray, in the most natural way in the world, without any effort of his own, without even thinking about it, it will necessarily come to the front and make his life go wrong. Now, wherever this comes from, or whatever it is, it is a great *fact*, and the first practical question in religion that rises to many a mind is this, "What must I do to be saved from this inevitable, and universal, and terrible fact of Sin?"

We have probably all made certain experiments upon this fact already, and we could all give some explanation, at least, of what we are doing to be saved.

If some of us were asked, for instance, what was our favourite fact of salvation for resisting the power of sin, we might say the fact that we were doing our best. Well, it is a great thing for any man to be doing his best. But two questions will test the value of this method of resisting the power of sin. In the first place, How is your best doing? In the second place, Do you

think you could not do better? As to how your best is doing, you would probably admit that, on the whole, it was not doing very well. Your best, in fact, if you were to be candid, has not been much to boast of after all. And as regards your not doing better you might also admit that in some ways, perhaps, *you could.* The fact of salvation then is evidently a poor one, as far as results are concerned, and may be judiciously laid aside.

Then another experiment people try to break the power of sin is to get thoroughly absorbed in something else — business, or literature, or some favourite pursuit. It is in one's spare hours sin comes to us and we try to have no sin by having no spare hours. But our very preoccupation may then be one continuous sin. And, besides, if a man have no spare hours, he will have spare minutes, and sin comes on generally in a minute. Most sins, indeed, are done in minutes. They take hours to execute, it may be; but in a moment the plot is hatched, the will consents, and the deed is done. Preoccupation then is clearly no saviour.

Then there are others who withdraw from the world altogether, to break with sin, and live the solitary life of the recluse. But they forget that sin is not in the sinful world without, but in the sinful heart within, and that it enters the hermit's solitary cell as persistently as the wicked world around. So solitude comes to be no saviour.

And there are others still who take refuge in religiousness. In going to church, for instance, and in religious society and books. But there is not *necessarily* any more power to resist sin within the four walls of a church or the pages of a religious book, than between the walls of a theatre or the boards of a novel. There may be less temptation there, not necessarily more power. For there is no strength in mere religious ceremonies to cancel the power of sin, and many a man proves this, after years and years of church, by wakening to find the power of sin in his breast unchanged, and breaking out, perhaps, in every form of vice. Neither is religiousness, therefore, any escape from the dominion of sin.

And lastly, some of us have resort to doctrines. We have got the leading points of certain doctrines worn into our minds, and because these have a religious name we are apt to think they have also a religious power. In reality, while dealing with the theory of grace and sin, we may leave the power to resist it untouched. And many a pen has been busy with a book on the doctrine of sin while the life which employed it was going to destruction for want of salvation from its power.

There is one doctrine especially with which the word salvation is most often connected and to which many look for their deliverance from the power of indwelling sin. And it may seem a startling statement to make, but it will emphasise

a distinction which cannot be too clearly drawn, that even the *atonement* itself is not the answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved from the power of sin?" The answer entirely depends on the atonement, but it is not the atonement. The atonement is *not* the fact of salvation which saves the sinner from the power of sin. If you believed in the atonement to-day, if you were absolutely assured that your past sins were all forgiven, that would be no criterion that you would not be as bad as ever again to-morrow. The atonement, therefore, is not the fact which deals with the power of sin. The atonement deals with a point. We are coming to that. Just now we are talking of a life. We are looking out for something which will deal with something in our life — something which will redeem our life from destruction. And a man may believe the atonement whose life is *not* redeemed from destruction.

You have gone out into the country on a summer morning, and as you passed some little rustic mill, you saw the miller come out to set his simple machinery agoing for the day. He turned on the sluice, but the water-wheel would not move. Then, with his strong arm, he turned it once or twice, then left it to itself to turn busily all the day. It is a sorry illustration in detail, but its principle means this, that the atonement is the first great turn as it were which God gives in the morning of conversion to the wheel of the

Christian's life. Without it nothing more would be possible: alone it would not be enough. The water of life must flow in a living stream all through the working day and keep pouring its power into it ceaselessly till the life and the work are done.

Now, practically everything depends in salvation upon the clearness with which this great truth is recognised. Sin is a *power* in our life; let us fairly understand that it can only be met by another power. The fact of sin works all through our life. The death of Christ, which is the atonement, reconciles us to God, makes our religion possible, puts us in the way of the power which is to come against our sin and deliver our life from destruction. But the Water of Life, which flows from the *life* of Christ, is the power itself. *He* redeemeth my life, by His life, from destruction. This is the power, Paul says, which redeemed his life from destruction. Christ's life, not His death, *living* in his life, absorbing it, impregnating it, transforming it. "Christ," as he confessed, "*in Me*." And this, therefore, is the meaning of a profound sentence in which Paul states the true answer to the question, What must I do to be saved ? records this first great fact of salvation and pointedly distinguishes it from the other. "If when we were enemies we were *reconciled* to God by the *death* of His Son, much more, being reconciled, *we shall be saved by His life*" (Rom. v. 10).

"We shall be saved by His *life*," says Paul. Paul meant no disrespect to the atonement when he said, "We shall be saved by his life." He was bringing out in relief one of the great facts of salvation. If God gives atoning power with one hand, and power to save the life from destruction with the other, there is no jealousy between. Both are from God. If you call the one justification and the other sanctification, God is the author of them both. If Paul seems to take something from the one doctrine and add it to the other, he takes nothing from God. Atonement is from God. Power to resist sin is from God. When we say we shall be saved by the death of Christ, it is true. When Paul says, "We shall be saved by His life," it is true. Christ is all and in all, the beginning and the end. Only when we are speaking of one fact of sin, let us speak of the corresponding fact of grace. When the thing we want is power to redeem our life from destruction, let us apply the gift which God has given us for our life, and for guilt the gift of guilt. When an Israelite was bitten in the wilderness, he never thought of applying *manna* to the wound. The manna was for his *life*. But he *did* think of applying the brazen serpent. The manna would never have cured his sin; nor would the brazen serpent have kept him from starving. Suppose he had said, "Now I am healed by this serpent, I feel cured, and I need not eat this manna any more. The serpent has

done it all, and I am well." The result would have been, of course, that he would have *died.* The man, to be sure, was cured, but he has to *live,* and if he eats no manna his life must languish, go to destruction, die. Without taking any trouble about it, simply by the inevitable processes of nature, he would have died. The manna was God's provision to redeem his life from destruction, after the serpent had redeemed it from death. And if he did nothing to stop the natural progress of destruction, in the natural course of things, he must die. Now there is no jealousy between these two things — the manna is from God and the serpent is from God. But they are different gifts for different things. The serpent gave life, but could not keep life; the manna kept life, but could not give life. Therefore, the Israelites were saved by the serpent, but they did not try to eat the serpent.

To apply this to the case in hand. The atonement of Christ is the brazen serpent. Christ's life is the manna — the bread of life. Our sins are not forgiven by bread, nor are our lives supported by death. Our life is not redeemed from destruction by the atonement, nor kept from day to day from the power of sin by the atonement. Our life is not redeemed from destruction by the death of Christ, nor kept from day to day by the death of Christ. But we are saved, as Paul says, by his "*life.*" We cannot live upon death. *Mors janua vitæ* — death is the gate of life. And after

we have entered the gateway by the death of Christ, we shall be saved by His life.

To sum up, therefore. It is one thing, therefore, to be saved by the death of Christ, and another to be saved by His life; and while both expressions are correct, to talk of being *saved* by the *death* of Christ is not so scriptural as to talk of being saved by the *life* of Christ; and Paul, with his invariable conciseness on important points, has brought out the facts of salvation with profound insight in the pregnant antithesis already quoted, "*When we were enemies* we were *reconciled* by the *death* of Christ, *now* we shall be saved by His life."

What first fact of salvation, therefore, is to be brought to bear upon the first great fact of sin, is not our own efforts, our own religiousness, our own doctrine, the atonement, or the death of Christ, but the power of the life of Christ. He redeemeth my life from destruction. How? By His life. This is the fact of salvation. It takes life to redeem life — power to resist power. Sin is a ceaseless, undying power in our life. A ceaseless, undying power must come against it. And there is only one such power in the universe — only one, which has a chance against sin: the power of the living Christ. God knew the power of sin in a human soul when He made so great provision. He knew how great it was; He calculated it. Then He sent the living Christ against it. It is the careful and awful estimate

of the power of sin. God saw that nothing else would do. It would not do to start our religion, then leave us to ourselves. It would not do with hearts like ours, yearning to sin, to leave us with religiousness or moral philosophy or doctrine. Christ must come Himself, and live with us. He must come and make His abode with us. He cannot trust us from His sight; so that when we live it shall be not we that live, but Christ living in us, and the life which we are now living in the flesh must be lived by the power of the Son of God.

What, then, must I do to be saved? Receive the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. Slave of a thousand sins, receive the Lord Jesus Christ into thy life, and thy life, thy far-spent life, shall yet be redeemed from destruction. Receive the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou who hast lived in the far famine land shalt return and live once more by thy Father's side. Thou seekest not a welcome to thy Father's house — of thy welcome thou hast never been afraid. But thou seekest a livelihood; thou seekest *Power*. Thou seekest power to be pure, to be true, to be free from the power of sin. "What must I do to be saved from that? What power will free me from that?" The power of the living Christ! "As many as received Him, to them gave He *power* to become the sons of God." "Power to become the sons of God" — the great fact of salvation. Receive the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. (*Luther Santa Scala.*)

Christ, therefore, is the power of God unto salvation — the counter-fact to the power of *sin unto destruction.* Christ is the way — He is also the Truth and the *Life.* This power, this life, is within our reach each moment of our life; as near, as free, as abundant as the air we breathe. A breath of prayer in the morning, and the morning life is sure. A breath of prayer in the evening, and the evening blessing comes. So our life is redeemed from destruction. Breath by breath our life comes into us. Inch by inch it is redeemed from destruction. So much prayer to-day — so many inches redeemed to-day. So much water of life to-day — so many turns of the great wheel of life to-day. Therefore, if we want to be saved — whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely. If you want to be saved, breathe the breath of life. And if you cannot breathe, let the groans which cannot be uttered go up to God, and the power will come. To all of us alike, if we but ask we shall receive. For God makes surpassing allowances, and He will do unto the least of us exceeding abundantly above all that *we* ask or think.

Secondly, and more briefly, the second fact of sin is the stain of sin, the second fact of salvation. "He healeth all thy diseases." The stain of sin is a very much more complicated thing even than the power of sin; and that for this reason — that most of it lies outside our own life. If it only

lay in dark blotches upon our own life, we might set to work to rub it out. But it is a blind vision of sin which confines has crossed over into other lives all through the years that have gone, and left its awful mark — *our* mark, on every soul we touched since the most distant past.

A young man once lay upon his deathbed. He was a Christian, but for many days a black cloud had gathered upon his brow. Just before his last breath, he beckoned to the friends around his bed. "Take my influence," he said, "and bury it with me." He stood on the very threshold of glory. But the stain of sin was burning hot upon his past. Bury his influence with him! No, his influence will remain. His life has gone to be with God, who gave it; but his influence — he has left no influence for Christ. His future will be for ever with the Lord. The unburied past remains behind, perhaps, for ever to be against him. The black cloud which hangs over many a dying brow means the stain of an influence lost for Christ — means with many a man who dies a Christian, that though his guilt has been removed and his life redeemed from destruction, the infection of his past lurks in the world still, and his diseases fester in open sores among all the companions of his life.

What must I do to be saved from the stain of sin? Gather up your influence, and see how much has been for Christ. Then undo all that has been against Him. It will never be healed

till then. This is the *darkest* stain upon your life. The stain of sin concerns your own soul, but that is a smaller matter. That can be undone — in part. There are open sores enough in our past life to make even heaven tremble. But God is healing them. He is blotting them from His own memory and from ours. If the stains that were there had lingered, life would have been a long sigh of agony. But salvation has come to our soul. God is helping you to use the means for repairing a broken life. He restoreth thy soul, He healeth all thy diseases. But thy brother's soul, and thy brother's diseases? The worst of thy stains have spread far and wide with*out* thyself; and God will only heal them, perhaps, by giving you grace to deal with them. You must retrace your steps over that unburied past, and undo what you have done. You must go to the other lives which are stained with your blood-red stains and rub them out. Perhaps you did not lead them into their sin; but you did not lead them out of it. You did not show them you were a Christian. You left a worse memory with them than your real one. You pretended you were just like them — that your sources of happiness were just the same. You did not tell them you had a power which kept your life from sin. You did not take them to the closet you had at home, and let them see you on your knees, nor tell them of your Bible which was open twice a day. And all these negatives were stains and

sins. It is a great injustice to do to any one we know — the worst turn we could do a friend, to keep the best secret back, and let him go as calmly to hell as we are going to heaven.

If we cannot bury our influence, thank God if here and there we can undo it still. The other servant in the kitchen, the clerk on the next stool, the lady who once lived in the next house, we must go to them, by the grace of God, and take the stain away. And let the thought that much that we have done can never be undone, that many whose lives have suffered from our sins have gone away into eternity with the stains still unremoved, that when we all stand round the throne together, even from the right hand of the judgment seat of Christ, we may behold on the left among the lost the stains of our own sin, still livid on some soul — let this quicken our steps as we go to obliterate the influence of our past, and turn our fear into a safeguard as we try to keep our future life for Christ.

The second fact of salvation, therefore, is to be effected by God in part and by ourselves in part — by God as regards ourselves; by God and ourselves as regards others. He is to heal our diseases, and we are to spread the balm He gives us wherever we have spread our sin.

Lastly. the third great fact of sin is guilt — the third fact of salvation is forgiveness. "He forgiveth all thine iniquities." The first question we asked

came out of our life; the second mostly from our memory; but the third rises up out of conscience.

Our first cry, as we looked at our future, was, "Where can I get power?" Now we are looking at our past, and the question is, "Where can I get pardon?" The questions which conscience sends up to us are always the deepest questions. And the man who has never sent up the question, "Where can I get pardon?" has never been into his conscience to find out the deepest want he has. It is not enough for him to look lifeward; he must also look Godward. And it is not enough to discover the stain of his past, and cry out, "I have sinned." But he must see the guilt of his life and cry, "I have sinned *against God.*" The fact of salvation which God has provided to meet the fact of guilt, although it is the most stupendous fact of all, only comes home to man when he feels a criminal and stands like a guilty sinner, for pardon at God's bar.

It is not enough for him then to invoke God's strength against the power of sin. Just as the fact which meets the guilt of sin, as we have seen, can never meet the power of sin, so the fact which meets the power of sin can never meet the fact of guilt. *Manna* was what was required for a man's life; but it is no use against his guilt. *It is nothing* that he makes a good resolution not to do wrong any more, that he asked Christ to come and live with him and break the power of sin, and redeem his life from destruction. God

has something to say to him before that. Something must happen to him before that. He must come and give an account of himself before that. The good resolution is all very laudable for the days to come, but what about the past? God wants to know about the past. It may be convenient for us to forget the past, but God cannot forget it. We have done wrong, and wrong-doing must be punished. Wrong-doing must be punished — *must;* this is involved in one of the facts of sin. Therefore the punishment of wrong-doing must be involved in one of the facts of salvation. It is not in the first two. It must be somewhere in this.

Now the punishment of sin is death. In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. Therefore death is the punishment which must be in one of the facts of salvation. It was not in the other two. It must be somewhere in this. It will not meet the case if the sinner professes his penitence and promises humbly never to do the like again. It will not meet the case if he comes on his knees to apologise to God, and ask Him simply to forget that he has sinned, or beg Him to have pity on the misfortunes of his past. God did not say, "In the day thou eatest thereof I will pity thy misfortunes, in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely *apologise*, or thou shalt surely *repent*," but "in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely *die*." So death, and nothing less than death, must be in the fact of salvation from the guilt of sin, if such salvation is to be.

This fact, this most solemn necessity understood and felt, the rest is plain. We all know Some one died. We all know Who deserved to die. We all know Who *did* die. We know *we* were not wounded for our transgressions, we were not bruised for our iniquities. But we know Who was. The Lord hath not dealt with us according to our iniquities; but we know with Whom He has. We know Who bare our sins in His own body on the tree, — One who had none of His own. We know who was lifted up like the serpent in the wilderness — Him who died the just for the unjust. If we know this, we know the great fact of salvation, for it is this.

It only remains to answer one question more. How is a poor sinner to make this great fact his? And the answer is, By trusting Christ. He has nothing else wherewith to make it his. The atonement is a fact. Forgiveness is a fact. Let him believe it. He does not understand it. He is not asked to understand it. The proper way to accept a fact is to believe it; and whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. It is well to understand it, and you may try to understand it if you can, but till then you must believe it. For it is a fact, and your understanding it will not make it less or more a fact. The death of Christ will always be a fact. Forgiveness of sins will always be a fact. Son, accept the facts of sin: accept the facts of grace. The atonement, you say, confuses you. You do

not understand its bearings; the more you think and hear and read, the more mysterious it becomes. And well it may, well it may!

A student went to a professor of theology not long ago, and asked him how long it took him to understand the atonement. He answered, all his life. Thinking perhaps there might be some mistake, the young man went to another professor, who taught the very doctrine in his class. "How long did it take you, sir," he asked, "to understand the atonement?" The professor thought a moment, then looked him in the face. "*Eternity*," he said, "*Eternity;* and I won't understand it then."

We have been dealing to-day with facts; we need not be distressed if we do not understand them. God's love — how could we? God's forgiveness — how could we? "He forgiveth all mine iniquities." It is a fact. What proof could commend itself if God's fact will not do? Verify the fact as you may, find out as much about it as you may; only accept it — accept it first. You are keeping your life waiting while you are finding out about it. You are keeping your salvation waiting. And it is better to spend a year in ignorance than live a day unpardoned. You are staining other lives while you are waiting: your influence is against Christ while you are waiting, and it is better to spend your life in ignorance than let your influence be against Christ. Most things in religion are matters of simple faith. But when we come to the atonement, somehow we all

become rationalists. We want to see through it and understand it — as if it were finite like ourselves, as if it could ever be compassed by our narrow minds — as if God did not know that we never could fathom it when He said, "Believe it," instead of "Understand it." We are not rationalists when we come to the love of God, or to faith, or prayer. We do not ask for a theory of love before we begin to love, or a theory of prayer before we begin to pray. We just begin. Well, just begin to believe in forgiveness. When they brought the sick man once to Jesus, He just said, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee," and the man just believed it. He did not ask, "But why should you forgive me, and how do you mean to forgive me? and I don't see any connection between your forgiveness and my sin." No; he took the fact. "*Immediately* he rose up, and departed to his own house, glorifying God." The fact is, if we would come to Christ just now, we should never ask any questions. Our minds would be full of Him. We should be in the region of eternal facts, and we should just believe them. At least, we should believe *Him;* and He is the Saviour, the sum of all the facts of salvation — the one Saviour from all the facts of sin. If you will not receive salvation as a fact, receive the Lord Jesus Christ as a gift — we ask no questions about a gift. Receive the Lord Jesus Christ as a gift, and thou shalt be saved from the power and the stain and the guilt of sin, for His is the power and the glory. Amen.

NUMBER IX

"What Is Your Life?"

JAMES iv. 14.

TO-MORROW, the first day of a new year, is a day of *wishes*. To-day, the last day of an old year, is a day of *questions*. To-morrow is a time of anticipation; to-day a time of reflection. To-morrow our thoughts will go away out to the coming opportunities, and the larger vistas which the future is opening up to even the most commonplace of us. To-day our minds wander among buried memories, and our hearts are full of self-questioning thoughts of what our past has been.

But if to-morrow is to be a day of hope, to-day must be a day of thought. If to-morrow is to be a time of resolution, to-day must be a day of investigation. And if we were to search the Bible through for a basis for this investigation, we should nowhere find a better than this question, "*What is your life?*"

We must notice, however, that life is used here in a peculiar sense — a narrow sense, some would say. The question does not mean, "What

quality is your life?" "What are you making of life?" "How are you getting on with it?" "How much higher is the tone of it this year than last?" It has a more limited reference than this. It does not refer so much to quality of life as to quantity of life. It means, "How much life have you got?" "What value do you set upon your life?" "How long do you think your life will last?" "How does it compare with eternity?"

And there are reasons which make this form of the question particularly appropriate, not only to this last day of the year, but, apart altogether from that, to the state of much religious thought upon the subject at the present moment.

These reasons are mainly these two:

1. There is a large school just now who utterly ignore this question.

2. There is a large school who utterly spoil it.

There may be said to be two ways of looking at life, each of which finds favour just now with a wide circle of people:

1. The theory that life is everything.

2. The theory that life is nothing.

Or, adding the converse to these:

1. The theory that life is everything and eternity nothing.

2. The theory that life is nothing and eternity everything.

Now, those who hold the first of these, object to the time-view of life altogether. Now there

can be no doubt that this is the favourite of the two. For one thing, it is decidedly the fashionable view. It is the view culture takes, and many thinking men, and many thoughtful and modern books. Life, these say, life is the great thing. We know something about life. We are in it — it is pulsating all around us. We feel its greatness and reality. But the other does not press upon us in the same way. It is far off and mystical. It takes a kind of effort even to believe it. Therefore let us keep to what we know, what we are in, what we are sure of.

The strength of this school is in their *great* view of life; their weakness and great error, in their little view of time. Their enthusiasm for the quality of life makes them rush to the opposite extreme and ignore its quantity. The thought that life is short has little influence with them. They simply refuse to let it weigh with them, and when pressed with thoughts of immortality, or time-views of human life, they affirm, with a kind of superiority, that they have too much to do with the present to trouble themselves with sentimentalisms about the future.

The second view is the more antiquated, perhaps the more illiterate. Life, with it, is nothing at all. It is a bubble, a vapour, a shadow. Eternity is the great thing. Eternity is the significant thing. Eternity is the only thing. Life is a kind of unfortunate preliminary — a sort of dismal antechamber, where man must wait, and be

content for a little with the view of eternity from the windows. His turn to go is coming; meantime let him fret through the unpleasant interval as resignedly as he can, and pray God to speed its close.

The strength of this school is that it *recognises* time *and eternity* for itself. Its weakness, and its great error, that it refuses to think of life and spoils the thought of eternity for those who do. The first school requires to be told that life is *short;* this, so far from having to be told that it is short, have to be told that life is long — for life to it is *nothing*.

It is clear, of course, that each of these views is the natural recoil from the other. The mistake is that each has recoiled too far. The life-something theory cannot help recoiling from the life-nothing theory; but it need not recoil into life-everything. So the eternity-something theory cannot help recoiling from the eternity-nothing theory; but it need not recoil into eternity-everything.

It is plain, then, that both these theories are wrong, and yet not altogether wrong. There is a great deal of truth in each — so much, indeed, that if the parts of truth which each contains were joined into one, they would form a whole — *the truth*. And if the sides were nearly equal, — as many who think life nothing as think life everything, — there could be nothing more useful than to attempt to strike the harmony between. But

the sides are not equal, and hence the better exercise will be to deal with the side which has the truth the furthest in arrear.

This, undoubtedly, is the life-school — the life-everything school. The other is, comparatively, a minority. At least, those who hold the extreme form of it are a minority. It is a more obvious and striking truth that life is something. And it is not difficult to convince the man who makes eternity everything to allow something to life; but to get the man who makes life everything to grant a little to eternity is a harder thing to attempt; for the power of the world to come may be yet unfelt and unproved, and the race of life so swift that the rival flight of time may still remain unseen.

Besides, there are mainly two great classes who swell the ranks of the majority, who refuse to think of time.

1. The great busy working and thinking class, who are *too careful* of time ever to think of eternity as its successor. These have too little time to think of time.

2. The great lazy worldly class, who are *too careless* of time ever to think that it will cease. These have too much time to think of time — *so* much of it that they think there will be always much of it.

Now it is to these two classes that this old year's question comes home with special power, "What is your life?" And it is no reason why

the majority should decline to face the question that a fanatical minority have nauseated the subject by the exaggeration of eternity. For if these men suffer in their lives by treating life as a thing of no importance, the other classes certainly suffer more by exaggerating life at the tremendous expense of eternity.

The great objection to thinking about eternity, or, to take the other side, the brevity of life, is that it is not practical. The life-school professes to be eminently utilitarian. It will have nothing to do with abstractions, nothing that does not directly concern life. Anything that is outside the sphere of action is of little consequence to practical men. The members of this school feel themselves in the rush of the world's work, and it is something to think (to *think*) of that. It is something to live in the thick of it, to yield to the necessities of it, to share its hopes, and calmly endure its discipline of care. But when you leave life, they protest, you are away from the present and the real. You are off into poetry and sentiment, and the meditations you produce may be interesting for philosophers and dreamers, but they are not for men who take their stand on the greatness of life and crave to be allowed to leave the mystical alone.

Now the answer to that — and it may be thoroughly answered — may be given in a word. First of all, who told you eternity was nothing?

Who told you it was an unpractical, unprofitable dream? Who told you to go on with your work and let time and other abstractions alone? It was certainly not God. God takes exactly the opposite view. He is never done insisting on the importance of the question. "O that they were wise . . . that they would consider their latter end" — that is what God says. "Make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days what it is" — that is what David, the man after God's own heart, says. "Teach me to number my days" — that is what Moses, the friend of God, says.

And you will notice the reason God gives for thinking about these things. It was enough, indeed, for Him to say it, without any reason; but He has chosen to give us one. *Why* are we to number our days? That we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. *That* is the reason for thinking about time. It is to make us wise. Perhaps you have thought this is merely a piece of sentiment, a flower of rhetoric for the poet's lyric, a harmless, popular imagination for ignorant people who cannot discourse upon life, a dramatic truth to impress the weak to prepare their narrow minds for death. But no; it is not that. God never uses sentiment. And if you think a moment, you will see that it is not the narrow mind which needs this truth, but *his* who discourses on life. The man who discourses most on life should discourse the most on time. When you discourse

on life, you plead that it is in the interests of life. You despise the time view as unpractical in the interests of life — in the interests of the new life school who care too much for life to spend their strength upon the sentiment of time. Ah! but if you really cared for life, this *sentiment* would make you love it but the more. For time is the measurement of life. And all in life must be profoundly affected by its poor, scant quantity. Your life on earth *is* a great thing, a rich and precious possession. It is *true* that it is full of meaning and issues no man can reckon. But it is ten thousand times greater for the thought that it must cease. One of the chief reasons why life is so great is just that life is so short. If we had a thousand years of it, it would not be so great as if we had only a thousand hours. It is great because it is little. A man is to be executed, and the judge has given him a month to prepare for death. One short month. How rich every hour of it becomes, how precious the very moments are! But suppose he has only *five minutes. Then* how unspeakably solemn! How much greater is the *five minutes life* than the *month* life! Make eternity a month and life five minutes — if such a tremendous exaggeration of life could be conceived. How much greater does it become for being so very small!

How precious time is to a short-lived man! I am to die at *thirty*, you at *sixty;* a minute is twice as dear to me, for each minute is twice as short.

So a day to me is more than a day to Methuselah, for he had many days, and I but few. Oh! if we really felt the dignity of life, we would wonder no less at its brevity than at its dignity. If we felt the greatness of life *at this moment*, how much keenness would this further thought add to it — that we might be dead before this sermon was done! How many things we permit ourselves on the theory that life is great would be most emphatically wrong on the theory that time was also great! How many frivolous things — yes, how many great things, even — should we have to turn out this moment from our lives for just this thought, if we believed it, that time is short! For there is no room among the crowded moments of our life for things which will not live when life and time are past. So no one who does not feel the keen sense of time flying away at every moment with the work he has done and the opportunities he has lost, can know the true greatness of life and the inexpressible value of the self-selected things with which he fills its brief and narrow span. The thought of death must change at every point the values of the significant things of earth not less than the thought of life, and we must ever feel the solemn relations given to our life and work from the overwhelming thought that the working-life is brief.

A modern poet has described, in strangely suggestive words, the time when first the idea of time and death began to dawn upon this earth.

The scene is laid in some Eastern land, where a great colony had risen from the offspring of Cain, the murderer of his brother. Cain knew what death was. He had seen it. But he alone, of all his scattered family, for he kept his burning secret to himself. Cain's family grew and spread throughout the land, but no thought of death came in to check the joyous wastry and exuberance of life; till one day, in boyish pastime, a hurled stone strikes Lamech's son, and the lad falls to the earth. Friends gather round him as he lies, and bring him toys and playthings to wake him from his sleep. But no sleep like this had ever come to Lamech's son before, and soft entreating words bring no responsive sound to the cold lips, or light to the closed eyes. Then Cain comes forward, whispering, "The boy is dead," and tells the awe-struck family of this mystery of death. And then the poet describes the magic of this word, how "a new spirit, from that hour, came o'er the house of Cain." How time, once vague as air, began to stir strange terrors in the soul, and lend to life a moment which it had not known before. How even the sunshine had a different look. How "work grew eager, and device was born." How

> "It seemed the light was never loved before,
> Now each man said, 'T will go, and come no more.'
> No budding branch, no pebble from the brook,
> No form, no shadow, but new dearness took
> From the one thought that Life must have an end."

So the thought that life will be no more, that each day lived is hastening on the day when life itself must stop, makes every priceless hour of ours a million times more great, and tinges every thought, and word, and act with the shadow of what must be.

From all this, it must now be clear that the man who is really concerned to live well must possess himself continually of the thought that he is not to live long. And that it is in the highest interests of great living to stimulate life, not to paralyse it, that God asks us all to-day, "What is your life?"

But the Bible has done more than ask this question. It has answered it. And when the Bible answers a question, it gives always the best answer. We could do no better, therefore, than consult it a little further now, for it so happens that there are few subjects which the Bible goes into so thoroughly as this one — few thoughts which rise more often or more urgently to the surface of the great Bible lives than "What is your life?"

And, besides, there is a peculiarity in the Bible answers which makes them particularly valuable, and which has tended, more than anything else, to impress them profoundly upon the deeper spirit of every age. And that peculiarity is this, that the answer is never given in hard, bare words, but is presented, wrapped up, as it were, in some

figure of such exquisite beauty, that no mind could refuse to give it a place, were it only for the fineness of its metaphor. Take, as an example, the answer which follows the question in the text, "What is your life?" "It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Who could afford to forget a thought like that, when once its beauty had struck root within the mind? And if God did not rather choose a few hard solid sentences of truth to perpetuate an answer to one of the most solid thoughts of life, is it not just because He wanted it to be remembered evermore — because He wanted the thought of the shortness and uncertainty of life to live in every living soul, and haunt the heart in times when other thoughts were passionless and dull? In childhood, before deeper thoughts had come, he would paint this truth, in delicate tints, on every opening soul; and in riper years, when trouble and sickness came and weaned the broken mind from sterner thoughts, he would have the soul still furnished with these ever-preaching pictures of the frailty of its life.

Why is it that there is such strange attractiveness to many hearts in the Bible thoughts of time, and why the peculiar charm with which the least religious minds will linger over the texts which speak of human life? It is because God has thrown an intensely living interest around these truths, by carrying His images of the thoughts

He most wanted remembered into the great galleries of the imagination, where the soul can never tire. Had such thoughts been left to reason, it would have stifled them with its cold touch; had they been sunk in the heart, it would have consumed itself and them in hot and burning passion; but in the broad region of the imagination there is expansiveness enough for even such vast truths to wander at their will, and power and mystery enough to draw both heart and reason after them in wondering, trembling homage. And if no day almost passes over our heads without some silent visitation to remind us what we are, it is because the Bible has utilised all the most common things of life to bring home these lessons to the soul, so that not a shadow on the wall, or blade of withered grass, is not full of meanings which every open heart can read.

Now, it is a remarkable fact, in this connection, that the Bible has used up almost every physical image that is, in any way, appropriate to the case. And if we were to go over the conceptions of life which have been held by great men in succeeding ages of the world, we should find scarce anything new, scarce anything the Bible had not used before.

There lie scattered throughout this Book no fewer than *eighteen* of these answers, and all in metaphor, to the question, "What is your life?" And any one who has not before gathered them together, cannot but be surprised at the singular

beauty and appropriateness of the collection. To begin with, let us run over their names. "*What is your life? It is*

A tale that is told.
A pilgrimage.
A swift post.
A swift ship.
A handbreadth.
A shepherd's tent removed.
A thread cut by the weaver.
A dream.
A sleep.
A vapour.
A shadow.
A flower.
A weaver's shuttle.
Water spilt on the ground.
Grass.
Wind.
Nothing.

Generally speaking, the first thing to strike one about these images is that they are all *quick* things — there is a suggestion of brevity and evanescence about them, and this feeling is so strong that we might fancy there was only one answer to the question, What is your life? namely, Your life is *short*. But if we look closer at them for a moment, shades of difference will begin to appear, and we shall find the hints of other meanings as great and striking, and quite as necessary to complete the conception of "your life."

First of all, then, and most in detail, *three* of these metaphors give this answer: — (1) Your life is a very LITTLE thing. We have admitted that life is a very great thing. It is also a very little thing. Measure it by its bearing on eternity; there is no image in God's universe to compare

with it for majesty and dignity. It is a sublime thing — Life. But measure it by its bearings upon time, by its results on the world, on other lives; there is no image too small to speak of its meanness and narrowness, for it is a little thing, "Your life." It is "a SHADOW," it is "a SHEPHERD'S tent removed," it is "a TALE THAT IS TOLD."

A Shadow. It is unreal; it is illusory. It falls across the world without affecting it; perhaps it only darkens it. Then it rises suddenly, and is gone. It leaves few impressions; and if it could, shadow cannot act much on other shadows. So life at the best is a poor, resultless, shadowy thing.

A Shepherd's Tent Removed. Just before sunset the slopes of the Eastern hills would be dotted with Arab tents. And when night fell, the traveller in these lands, as he lay down to rest, would see the glimmering of their fires and hear the noisy bleating of their flocks. But in the morning, when he looked out, both herds and herdsmen would be gone. Hours ago, perhaps, the tents had been struck, and the hills would be silent and lonely as if no foot had ever stirred the dew on their slopes before. So man, the Bible says, traces out his trackless path through life. He is here to-day, in the noise of the world's labour; to-morrow, when you look for him, he is gone. Through the night sometime his frail tent has been struck, and his place is empty and still. His life has left no track to tell

that it was there — except a burnt-out fire to show that there a *shepherd's tent* had been removed.

But the best of these images is the third — A tale that is told. Some think this means a thought or meditation. "Your life is a meditation," as the margin has it. But as the psalm in which the words occur was written by Moses, it is probable that the obvious meaning of the words is the correct one. In their journeyings the children of Israel would have many weary, unoccupied hours. There would be no books to relieve the monotony, and no doubt the people would attempt to beguile the tedious marches, and the long hours by the camp fires at night, with the familiar Oriental custom of narrating personal adventures in the form of stories or tales. Night after night, as this went on, the different tales of the story-tellers would begin to get mixed, then to confuse their audience, perhaps then even to weary them. The first tale, which made a great impression once, would lose its power, and the second, which was thought more wonderful still, would be distanced by the third. Then the third would be forgotten, and the fourth and the fifth; till *all* would be forgotten, and *last night's* tale would be the vivid picture in every mind to-day. But the story-teller could know that to-night another would have his turn, and sit in the place of honour, and tell a more vivid tale than he told the night before, and his would be forgotten and ignored.

So *we* do spend our years as a tale that is told. The dead have told their tales; they have said their say. They thought we would remember what they did and said. But, no; they are forgotten. They have become old stories now. And our turn will come — our turn to stop; our turn for the Angel of Death to close the chapter of our life, whether it be a novel or a psalm, and write the universal "Finis" at the end. What though a sentence here and there may linger for a few brief years to find a place — without quotation marks — in some tale better told, the tale itself must close and be forgotten, like the rest, an ill-told, ill-heard, and ill-remembered tale.

There is, next, and briefly, another set of metaphors which bring out the more common answer (which, therefore, it will only be necessary to name), that (2) *Life is a short thing*. *Shortness*, of course, is different from littleness. A lightning flash is short, but not little. But life is both short and little. And there are two ways in which life is short: (1) Measured by growth. (2) Measured by minutes. Those who are growing must feel time shortest. They have started with the wrecks of being to fashion themselves into *men*, and life is all too short to do it in. Therefore they work out their salvation with fear and trembling — fearful lest death should come, trembling lest life should stop before it was worked out. But they who measure life by its

minutes have nothing to say of its brevity; for their purpose it is long enough. It is not more time they want, but "the more capacious soul," as some one says, "to flow through every pore of the little that they have." But there is no distinction in the Bible treatment of the two. Time is the same to all. It is a *handbreadth; a weaver's shuttle; nothing; "an eagle hasting to the prey"; a swift post; a swift ship.* David used to pray to God to give him a measure for his days. Well, he got it. It was the breadth of his hand. We carry about with us continually the measure of our days. "My days are as an handbreadth."

The others are familiar symbols enough. The weaver's shuttle — is it the monotony, the sameness, the constant repetition of life? Rather the quickness, the rapid flight through the thin web of time; the shuttle being then, perhaps, the quickest image men had.

Then those in the country in early times could know nothing more rapid or sudden than the swoop of an eagle on its prey; then, by the seaside, nothing more fleet than the swift sailing away of a ship driven by the unseen wind, or the hasty arrival of the "swift post" or messenger with tidings from afar. And it was not for want of opportunity if they did not learn their lessons well in these more simple days, when the few changes life had were each thus stamped with the thought of the great change into eternity.

The next thought is so closely allied to this that one can scarcely separate it but for convenience. It suggests the idea of *transitoriness*. Your life is a transitory thing. It is a thing of change. There is no endurance in it, no settling down in it, no real home to it here. Therefore God calls it a *pilgrimage* — a passing on to a something that is to be. Still closely allied to this, too, is the simile of the text — that life is a vapour. It means there is no real substance in it. It is a going and coming for a moment, then a passing away for ever. And then there are two or three metaphors which advance this idea still further. In their hands life passes from transitoriness into mystery. This life of ours, they show us, is a *mysterious thing*. And it is true life is a mysterious thing. We do not understand life — why it should begin, why it should end. There is some meaning in it somewhere that has baffled every search; some meaning beyond, some more real state than itself. So the Bible calls it a sleep, a dream, the wind. No book but the Bible could have called our life a *sleep*. The great book of the Greeks has called *death* a sleep: —

"Death's twin-brother, Sleep."

But the Bible has the profounder thought. *Life* is the sleep. Death is but the *waking*. And the great poets and philosophers of the world since have found no deeper thought of

life than this; and the greatest of them all has used the very word our little life is "rounded with a sleep." It seems to have been a soothing thought to them, and it may be a sanctifying thought to us that this life is not the end; and therefore it is a wise thing to turn round sometimes in our sleep, and think how there is more beyond than dreams.

There are but two thoughts more to bring our questions to a close, and they will add a practical interest to what has gone before.

What is your life?

1. Life is an irrevocable thing. We have just finished an irrevocable year. As we look back upon it, every thought and word and act of it is there in its place just as we left it. There are all the Sabbaths in their places, and all the well-spent days or ill-spent days between. There is every sin and every wish and every look still in its own exact surroundings, each under its own day of the month, at the precise moment of the day it happened. We are leaving it all at twelve o'clock to-night; but, remember, we leave it exactly as it stands. No single hour of it can be changed now, no smallest wish can be recalled, no angry word taken back. It is fixed, steadfast, irrevocable — stereotyped for ever on the past plates of eternity. Our book has a wonderful metaphor for this — "water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again." No, we cannot gather up these days and put

them back into Time's breaking urn, and live them over again. They are spilt upon the ground, and the great stream of Time has sucked them up, and cast them already on the eternal shores among all bygone years, and there they bide till God's time comes, and they come back, one by one, in order as they went, to meet us again and Him before the Judgment Bar. To-morrow is to be a time of resolution, is it? Well, let this resolution take the foremost place of all, that, when this day of next year comes, and we look once more at the irrevocable past, there shall be fewer things to wish undone, or words to wish unsaid, and more spots where memory shall love to linger still, more steps which, when retraced in thought, will fill the heart with praise.

Lastly, life is more than an irrevocable thing. It is an *uncertain* thing — so certainly uncertain, that it is certain we shall not all be here to see this next year close. What means the grim image in the Bible of the weaver's thread suspended in the air, and the blade of the lifted knife just touching it with its edge? It means that you must die. The thread of your life is to be cut. The knife may be lifted now, the keen blade just touching it; one pressure of the hand, and it is done. One half, left unfinished, still hanging to the past — the other, dropped noiselessly into eternity. Oh, life is an abruptly closing thing! Is it not as grass? In the morning,

it groweth up and flourisheth; in the evening, it is cut down and withereth. Is your life ready for the swiftly falling knife, for the Reaper who stands at your door? Have you heard that there is another life — a life which cannot die, a life which, linked to your life, will make the past still bright with pardon and the future rich with hope? *This life is in His Son.*

NUMBER X

Marvel Not

"*Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*" — JOHN iii. 7.

EVERY man comes into the world wrapped in an atmosphere of wonder — an atmosphere from which his whole after-life is a prolonged effort to escape. The moment he opens his eyes this sense of wonder is upon him, and it never leaves him till he closes them on the greatest wonder — Death. Between these wonders — the first awaking and the last sleep — his life is spent — itself a long-drawn breath of mystery.

This sense of wonder is not an evil thing, although it is a thing to escape from. It is one of God's earliest gifts, and one of God's best gifts; but its usefulness to childhood or to manhood depends on the mind escaping from wonder into something else — on its passing out from wonder into *knowledge*. Hence God has made the desire to escape as natural to us as the desire to wonder.

Every one has been struck with the wonderment of a little child; but its desire to escape

out of wonderment is a more marvellous thing. Its wonder becomes to it a constant and secret craving for an entrance into the rest of information and fact. Its eager questionings, its impatience of its own ignorance, its insatiable requests for knowledge, these are alike the symptoms of its wonder and the evidences of its efforts to escape. And although, in adult life, the developed man is too cautious or too proud to display his wonder like the child, it is there in its thin disguise as inquiry, or investigation, or doubt. And there is no more exuberant moment in a man's life than when this wonder works until it passes into truth, when reason flashes a sudden light into a groping mind, and knowledge whispers, "*Marvel not!*"

Of all the subjects which men have found it convenient to banish into these regions of the unknowable, none suffer so frequently as this of the being born again. The elements of mystery which are supposed to cluster about it are reckoned an ample excuse for even the most intelligent minds *not trying* to understand it, and more than a justification of any one who makes the attempt and fails.

The famous Rabbi, indeed, who was honoured with all this immortal discourse on regeneration is a case in point. He was just on the verge of losing himself in this most treasonable despair. Never was man more puzzled than Nicodemus at the initial statement of this truth.

Never was man's sense of wonder more profoundly excited, never more in danger of losing itself in the mazes of mystery, never nearer taking the easy escape by drowning itself in ignorance than when Jesus rallied the escaping faculties of the Jewish ruler by the message, "*Marvel not.*" The background working of that mind during its strange night interview with Christ is full of interest and lesson, and what we do know is full of suggestion and meaning. Twice already during the conversation had the great Teacher said in substance, "Ye must be born again." And one of the strongest intellects of its time stood literally petrified before the words. Nicodemus first tries to summon courage and frame a wondering question in reply: "How can a man be born when he is old?" and less a question, perhaps, than a soliloquy of his own. He has heard the great Teacher's statement, and he thinks upon it aloud, turning it over in his calm Hebrew mind till his very question returns upon himself and plunges him in deeper wonderment than before: "How can a man be born again when he is old?"

Next time he will venture no remark, and the Teacher's words fall uninterrupted on the puzzled scholar's ear: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." He has given him the key to it. But Nicodemus sees it not. He seems to have plunged into a dream. His reverie has deepened till he stands

absorbed in thought, with down-turned eyes, before his Master. Jesus stands by in silence and reads the wonder and perplexity in the gathering blackness of his brow. Nicodemus is despairing, perhaps. He is going to give it up. He is utterly baffled with the strange turn the conversation has taken. There is no satisfaction to be got from this clandestine meeting after all, and puzzled, and beaten, and crestfallen, he prepares to take his leave. But Jesus will not let the Divine sense of wonder be aroused to end like this. It must end in knowledge, not in ignominy. It must escape into spiritual truth, not into intellectual mystery. So He says, "Wonder not; Marvel not. There is nothing so very mysterious that I cannot make you know. You will understand it all if you come and think of it. Ye need not *marvel* that I said unto thee, 'Ye must be born again.'"

Thus Jesus saved Nicodemus from relapsing into ignorance of the greatest truth the world had known till then, or lulling his wonder to sleep for ever in mystery or despair.

Now for the sake of those of us who have been tempted to pause — where Nicodemus so nearly lost himself — on the threshold of this truth: for the sake of those of us who have almost felt drawn into the intellectual sin of drowning our wonder at this truth in despair of it, let us ask ourselves very shortly why Christ said, "Marvel not." And it may be convenient in following up

the subject from this side in a few words to divide the answer into three short heads.

I. "Marvel not" — as if it were unintelligible.

II. "Marvel not" — as if it were impossible.

III. "Marvel not" — as if it were unnecessary.

To begin with the first of these: —

I. "Marvel not" — as if it were unintelligible. There is nothing more unintelligible in the world than the *how* a soul is born again. There is nothing more intelligible than that it *is*. We can understand the fact, however, without necessarily understanding the act. The *act* of being born again is as mysterious as God. All the complaints which have been showered upon this doctrine have referred to the act — the act with which we have really nothing to do, which is a process of God, the agency, the unseen wind of the Spirit, and which Jesus Himself has expressly warned us not to expect to understand. "*Thou* canst *not* tell," He said, "whence it cometh or whither it goeth."

But there is nothing to frighten search in this. For precisely the same kind of mystery hangs over every process of nature and life. We do not understand the influence of sunshine on the leaves of a flower at this spring-time any more than we do the mysterious budding of spiritual life within the soul. Botany is a science for all that.

We do not give up the study of chemistry as hopeless because we fail to comprehend the

unseen laws which guide the delicate actions and reactions of matter. Nor do we disbelieve in the influence of food on the vital frame because no man has found the point exactly at which it passes from dead nourishment into life. We do not avoid the subject of electricity because electricity is a mystery, or heat because we cannot see heat, or meteorology because we cannot see the wind. Marvel not then, from the analogy of physical nature, if, concerning this spirit of regeneration, we cannot tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth. It is not on that account unintelligible that a man should be born again.

If we care again to take the analogy from the moral and intellectual nature, the same may be said with even greater emphasis.

The essence of regeneration is a change from one state to another — from an old life to a new one. Spiritually, its manifestation is in hating things once loved, or loving things once hated. God is no longer avoided, but worshipped; Christ no longer despised, but trusted.

Now, intellectually, changes at least in some way similar are happening every day. You rose up yesterday, bitterly opposed, let us say, to such and such a scheme. You were so strong in your opinion that nothing would ever shake you. You would *never* change, you said — *could* not. But you met a friend, who began to talk with you about it. You listened, then wavered, then capitulated. You allowed yourself to be talked round,

as you expressed it. You were *converted* to the other side. And in the evening your change of mind was so complete that you were literally born again — you were literally another man; you were in a new world of ideas, of interests, of hopes, with all the old dislikes in that special connection reversed, and the old loves turned into hates.

Something like this goes on, only with a higher agency, in the regeneration of the soul. Hence it is called by similar names a *change* of heart, or a *turning round* or a conversion to the other side. And just as talking round will change a man's opinion or convert him *intellectually*, so turning round by the Spirit of God will change his heart or convert him *spiritually*. When you are told, therefore, that your heart may be changed by the Spirit, even as your mind was changed by your friend, *marvel not*, as if it were unintelligible, that ye may be born again. What a few hours' conversation could do in making you love the side you hated, and hate the side you loved. Marvel not at what more the power of God could do in turning round your being from the old love to the new. And one might even press the analogy a little further, and add, if a few minutes' conversation with a fellow-man overturned the stubborn mountain of your mind, how much more should a few minutes' conversation with Christ, such as Nicodemus had, and which overthrew his strongest Messianic views, and changed the current of his life for ever from that hour, how much more

should it change yours the moment it touched His? But more than that. To Nicodemus, indeed, even the conception itself of being born again should have seemed no mystery. It was already a familiar thought in another sense to every Jewish heart — nothing more nor less, indeed, than one of the common political phrases of the day. The custom with a foreigner who came to reside in a Jewish town in these times was to regard him as *unclean*. He was held at arms' length; he was a man of different caste, the Jew had no dealings with the Samaritan. But if he wished to leave his gods and share the religious hopes and civil privileges of the Jews, there was one way out of the old state into the new — just one way — he must be born again. He was baptised with water, and passed through certain other rights, till finally reckoned clean, when he became as truly one of the chosen people as if he had been the lineal son of Abraham. And the process of initiation from the Gentile world into the kingdom of the Jew was called a regeneration, or a being born again. There was nothing, therefore, in the thoughtful consideration of the new birth — in the higher sense — for the Jew to marvel at. "Art thou a master in Israel," Jesus might well ask, "and understandest not these things?" A Master in Israel stumbling at an every-day illustration, marvelling as if it were unintelligible! "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." What the

Jews did to a stranger in admitting him to their kingdom corresponds exactly with what we do in our process of naturalisation.

Naturalisation — spiritualisation if we would be exactly accurate — is the idea, then, expressed in the "Born again" of Christ: and when we trace the expression back to its setting in Jewish politics, it yields the beautiful conception that God calls man — the foreigner, the stranger, the wanderer — to forsake the far country, and having been purified by initiatory rites from all uncleanness, to be translated into the kingdom of His dear Son. And though there may be, indeed, reasons why we should be so slow to understand it, and regions of rightful wonder in the deeper workings of the thought which we have not yet explored, there is at least this much clear, that we need *not* marvel as if it were unintelligible.

II. In a word or two, marvel not, as if it were *impossible*. There is a name for God which men, in these days, have many temptations to forget — God the *Creator* of heaven and earth. It was the name, perhaps, by which we first knew God — God had made our earth, our house; God had made us. He was our Creator — God. We thought God could make anything then, or do anything, or do everything. But we lost our happy, early childhood's faith; and now we wonder what things God can do, as if there were many things He could not.

But there is one thing we have little difficulty

in always referring to the creating hand of God — *life*. No one has ever made life but God. We call Him the author of life, and the author of life is a wondrously fertile author. He makes much life — life in vast abundance. There is nothing so striking in nature as the prodigality — the almost reckless prodigality — of life. It seems as if God delighted Himself in life. So the world is filled with it. In the woods, in the air, in the ocean-bed, everywhere teeming life, superabundance of life, which God has made.

Well, if God can give life, He can surely *add* life. Regeneration is nothing in principle but the adding of more life. It is God adding life *to* life — more life to a man who has some life. The man has life which God gave him once; but part of him — the best part of him — is dead. His soul is dead in trespasses and sins. God touches this, and it lives. Even as the body was dead and God breathed upon it till *it* lived, so God will breathe upon the soul, and more life, and better life, will come.

So there is nothing impossible in being born again, any more than there is the impossible in being born at all. What did Jesus Christ come into the world for? To give life, He said; even more abundant life. And Christ giving life, that is regeneration. It was not more knowledge Nicodemus wanted, though he thought so, but more *life;* and the best proof that life was possible was that life was granted. So the best

proof of Christianity is a Christian; the best proof of regeneration is a man who has been regenerated. *Can a man* be born again when he is old? Certainly. For it has been done. Think of Bunyan the sinner and Bunyan the saint; think of Newton the miscreant and Newton the missionary; think of Paul the persecutor and Paul the apostle; and *marvel not*, as if it were impossible that a man should be born again.

III. Marvel not — as if it were *unnecessary*. Regeneration is more than intelligible and possible — it is *necessary* to enter the kingdom of God. "Except a man be born again, he *cannot* see the kingdom of God." He says it *is* necessary. A man cannot *see* the kingdom of God except he be born again. He cannot only not enter it; Jesus says he cannot *see* it. It is actually invisible to him. This is why the world says of religion, "We do not understand it; we do not make it out; we do not *see it*." No, of course they do not see it; they *cannot* see it; first, it is necessary to be born again.

When men come into the world, they are born outside of the kingdom of God, and they cannot see into it. They may go round and round it, and examine it from the outside, and pass an opinion on it. But they are no judges. They are not seeing what they are speaking about. For that which is born of spirit is spirit, that which is born of flesh is *flesh;* and they can only

give a criticism which is material on a thing which is spiritual. Therefore the critical value of a worldly man's opinion on religious matters is nothing. He is open to an objection which makes his opinion simply ludicrous — he is talking about a thing which he has never seen. So far as one's experience of religion goes, regeneration makes all the difference. It is as if some one had been standing outside some great cathedral. He has heard that its windows are of stained glass and exceeding beautiful. He walks all round it and sees nothing but dull, unmeaning spaces — an iron grating over each, to intensify the gloom that seems to reign within. There is nothing worth seeing there, but everything to repel. But let him *go in*. Let him see things from the *inside*. And his eye is dazzled with the gorgeous play of colours; and the miracles and the parables are glowing upon the glass; and the figure of Jesus is there, and the story of His love is told on every pane: and there are choirs of angels, and cherubim and seraphim, and an altar where, in light which is inaccessible, is God.

So let a man enter into the kingdom of heaven — let a man be born again and enter — and he will SEE the kingdom of God. He will see the miracles and the parables which were meaningless, colourless once; he will see the story of the Cross, which was a weariness and an offence; he will see the person of Christ and the King in His

beauty, and beholding as in a glass the glory of the only begotten, shall be changed into the same image from glory to glory. Marvel not if it is necessary, to see all this, that he must be born again.

Within this great world there are a number of little worlds, to which entrance is only attainable by *birth*. There is the intellectual world, for instance, which requires the birth of brains; and the artistic world, which requires the birth of taste; and the dramatic world, which requires the birth of talent; and the musical world, which requires the gift of harmony and ear. A man cannot enter the intellectual world except he have brains, or the artistic world except he have taste. And he cannot make or *find* brains or taste. They must be *born* in him. A man cannot *make* a poetical mind for himself. It must be created in him. Hence "the poet is *born* — not *made*," we say. So the Christian is born, not made.

There remains one other and imperative protest against regeneration being unnecessary. Human nature demands regeneration as if it *were* necessary.

No man who knows the human heart or human history will marvel as if it were unnecessary that the world *must* be born again. Every other conceivable measure has been tried to reform it. Government has tried it, Philosophy has tried it, Philanthropy has tried it, and failed. The heart — the national heart or the individual heart —

remains deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. *Reformation* has been of little use to it; for every reformation is but a fresh and unguaranteed attempt to do what never has been done. *Reconstruction* has been of little use to it; for reconstruction is an ill-advised endeavour to rebuild a house which has fallen a thousand times already with the same old bricks and beams. Man has had every chance from the creation to the present moment to prove that regeneration was not the one necessity of the world — and, again, utterly failed.

We are still told, indeed, that all the world needs is just to get a start. Once set a man on his feet, or a universe, with a few good guiding principles. Give human nature fair play, and it must win in the end. But no. The experiment has been tried. God tried it Himself. It was fairly done, and it failed. The wickedness of man had waxed great throughout the land. So God said He would destroy all living flesh, and select a picked few of the best inhabitants to start the world afresh. A fair experiment. So all the world was drowned except a little nucleus in an ark — the picked few who were to found Utopia, who were to reconstruct the universe, who were to begin human life again, and make everything so much better than it was before. But the experiment failed. The picked few failed. Their children failed. Their children's children failed. Things got no better; only worse, per-

haps, and worse; and no man ever really knew the cause till Jesus told the world that it *must* — that it was *essentially* necessary — that it must, absolutely and imperatively must, be born again.

If human nature makes it necessary, much more does the Divine nature. When Christ shall present His Church to God, it must be as a Spotless Bride. In that eternal kingdom saints are more than subjects: they are the companions of the King. They must be a very select number. They must be a very high-born company. Marvel not if you and I are to be there — as if it were unnecessary that we must be born again. "Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle — who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart." There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth. Marvel not as if it were unnecessary that our robes should be washed in white.

Marvel not as if it were unintelligible.

Marvel not as if it were impossible.

Marvel not as if it were unnecessary that ye must be born again. *Marvel if you are. Marvel if you are.*

NUMBER XI

The Man after God's Own Heart

A BIBLE STUDY ON THE IDEAL OF A CHRISTIAN LIFE

"*A man after mine own heart, who shall fulfil all My will.*" — ACTS xiii. 22.

NO man can be making much of his life who has not a very definite conception of what he is living for. And if you ask, at random, a dozen men what is the end of their life, you will be surprised to find how few have formed to themselves more than the most dim idea. The question of the *summum bonum* has ever been the most difficult for the human mind to grasp. What shall a man do with his life? What is life for? and Why is it given? This has been the one great puzzle for human books and human thoughts; and ancient philosophy and mediæval learning and modern culture alike have failed to tell us what these mean.

No man, no book save one, has ever told the world what it wants, so each has had to face the problem in his own uncertain light, and carry out, each for himself, the life that he thinks best.

Here is one who says literature is the great thing — he will be a literary man. He lays down for himself his ideal of a literary life. He surrounds himself with the best ideals of style; and with his great ambition working towards great ends, after great models, he cuts out for himself what he thinks is his great life-work. Another says the world is the great thing — he will be a man of the world. A third will be a business man; a fourth, a man of science.

And the Christian must have a definite aim and model for his life. These aims are great aims, but not great enough for him. His one book has taught him a nobler life than all the libraries of the rich and immortal past. He may wish to be a man of business, or a man of science, and indeed he may be both. But he covets a nobler name than that. He will be the man after God's own heart. He has found out the secret philosophy never knew, that the ideal life is this — "A man after mine own heart, who shall fulfil all My will." And just as the man of the world, or the literary man, lays down a programme for the brief span of his working life, which he feels must vanish shortly in the unknown of the grave, much more will the Christian for the great span of his life before it arches over the valley into eternity.

He is a great man who has a great plan to his life — the greatest who has the greatest plan and keeps it. And the Christian should have the

greatest plan as his life is the greatest, as his work is the greatest, as his life and his work will follow him when all this world's is done.

Now we are going to ask to-day, What is the true plan of the ideal Christian life? We shall need a definition that we may know it, a description that we may follow it. And if you look, you will see that both, in a sense, lie on the surface of our text. "A man after mine own heart," — here is the definition of what we are to be. "Who shall fulfil all My will," — here is the description of how we are to be it. These words are the definition and the description of the model human life. They describe the man after God's own heart. They give us the key to the Ideal Life.

The general truth of these words is simply this: that the end of life is to do God's will. Now that is a great and surprising revelation. No man ever found that out. It has been before the world these eighteen hundred years, yet few have even found it out to-day. One man will tell you the end of life is to be true. Another will tell you it is to deny self. Another will say it is to keep the Ten Commandments. A fourth will point you to the Beatitudes. One will tell you it is to *do* good, another that it is to *get* good, another that it is to *be* good. But the end of life is in none of these things. It is more than all, and it includes them all. The end of life is not to deny self, nor to be true,

nor to keep the Ten Commandments — simply to do God's will. It is not to get good nor be good, nor even to do good — just what God wills, whether that be working or waiting, or winning or losing, or suffering or recovering, or living or dying.

But this conception is too great for us. It is not practical enough. It is the greatest conception of man that has ever been given to the world. The great philosophers, from Socrates and Plato to Immanuel Kant and Mill, have given us their conception of an ideal human life. But none of them is at all so great as this. Each of them has constructed an ideal human life, a universal life they call it, a life for all other lives, a life for all men and all time to copy. None of them is half so deep, so wonderful, so far-reaching, as this: "A man after mine own heart, who shall fulfil all My will."

But exactly for this very reason it is at first sight impracticable. We feel helpless beside a truth so great and eternal. God must teach us these things. Like little children, we must sit at His feet and learn. And as we come to Him with our difficulty, we find He has prepared two practical helps for us, that He may humanise it and bring it near to us, so that by studying these helps, and following them with willing and humble hearts, we shall learn to copy into our lives the great ideal of God.

The two helps which God has given us are these:

I. The Model Life realised in Christ, the living Word.

II. The Model Life analysed in the Bible, the written Word.

The usual method is to deal almost exclusively with the first of these. To-day, for certain reasons, we mean to consider the second. As regards the first, of course, if a man could follow Christ he would lead the model life. But what is meant by telling a man to follow Christ? How is it to be done? It is like putting a young artist before a Murillo or a Raphael, and telling him to copy it. But even as the artist in following his ideal has colours put into his hand, and brush and canvas, and a hint here from this master, and a touch there from another, so with the pupil in the school of Christ. The great Master Himself is there to help him. The Holy Spirit is there to help him. But the model life is not to be mystically attained. There is spirituality about it, but no unreality. So God has provided another great help, our second help: The Model Life analysed in the Word of God. Without the one the ideal life would be incredible; without the other it would be unintelligible. Hence God has given us two sides of this model life: (1) Realised in the Living Word; (2) Analysed in the written Word.

Let us search our Bibles then to find this ideal

life, so that copying it in our lives, reproducing it day by day and point by point, we may learn to make the most of our little life, and have it said of us, as it was of David, "A man after mine own heart, who shall fulfil all My will."

(1) The first thing our ideal man wants is a reason for his being alive at all. He must account for his existence. What is he here for? And the Bible answer is this: "I come to do Thy will, O God" (Heb. x. 7).

That is what we are here for — to do God's will. "I come to do Thy will, O God." That is the object of your life and mine — to do God's will. It is not to be happy or to be successful, or famous, or to do the best we can, and get on honestly in the world. It is something far higher than this — to do God's will. There, at the very outset, is the great key to life. Any one of us can tell in a moment whether our lives are right or not. Are we doing God's will? We do not mean, Are we doing God's work? — preaching or teaching, or collecting money — but God's *will*. A man may think he is doing God's work, when he is not even doing God's will. And a man may be doing God's work and God's will quite as much by hewing stones, or sweeping streets, as by preaching or praying. So the question just means this — Are we working out our common every-day life on the great lines of God's will? This is different from the world's model life. "I come to push my way."

This is the world's idea of it. Not my way — not my will, but Thine be done. This is the Christian's. This is what the man after God's own heart says: "I seek not mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me."

(2) The second thing the ideal man needs is *Sustenance.* After he has got life, you must give him food. Now, what food shall you give him? Shall you feed him with knowledge, or with riches, or with honour, or with beauty, or with power, or truth? No; there is a rarer luxury than these — so rare, that few have ever more than tasted it; so rich, that they who have will never live on other fare again. It is this: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me" (John iv. 34).

Again, to do God's will. That is what a man lives for: it is also what he lives on. *Meat.* Meat is strength, support, nourishment. The strength of the model life is drawn from the Divine will. Man has a strong will. But God's will is everlasting strength — Almighty strength. Such strength the ideal man gets. He grows by it, he assimilates it — it is his life. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that cometh out of God." Nothing can satisfy his appetite but this — he hungers to do God's will. Nothing else will fill him. Every one knows that the world is hungry. But the hungry world is starving. It has many meats and many drinks, but there is no nourishment in them. It has

pleasures, and gaiety, and excitement; but there is no food there for the immortal craving of the soul. It has the theatre and worldly society, and worldly books, and worldly lusts. But these things merely intoxicate. There is no sustenance in them. So our ideal life turns its eye from them all with unutterable loathing. "*My* meat is to do God's will." To do God's will! No possibility of starving on such wonderful fare as this. God's will is eternal. It is eternal food the Christian lives upon. In spring-time it is not sown, and in summer drought it cannot fail. In harvest it is not reaped, yet the storehouse is ever full. Oh, what possibilities of life it opens up! What possibilities of growth! What possibilities of work! How a soul develops on God's will!

(3) The next thing the ideal man needs is *Society*. Man is not made to be alone. He needs friendships. Without society, the ideal man would be a monster, a contradiction. You must give him friendship. Now, whom will you give him? Will you compliment him by calling upon the great men of the earth to come and minister to him? No. The ideal man does not want compliments. He has better food. Will you invite the ministers and the elders of the Church to meet him? Will you offer him the companionship of saint or angel, or seraphim or cherubim, as he treads his path through the wilderness of life? No; for none of these will

satisfy him. He has a better friendship than saint or angel, or seraphim or cherubim. The answer trembles on the lip of every one who is trying to follow the ideal life: "*Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in Heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother*" (Matt. xii. 50; Mark iii. 35).

Yes. *My* brother, and *My* sister and mother. Mother! The path of life is dark and cheerless to you. There is a smoother path just by the side of it — a forbidden path. You have been tempted many a time to take it. But you knew it was wrong, and you paused. Then, with a sigh, you struck along the old weary path again. It was the will of God, you said. Brave mother! Oh, if you knew it, there was a voice at your ear just then, as Jesus saw the brave thing you had done, "*My* mother!" "He that doeth the will of My Father, the same is *My* mother." Yes; this is the consolation of Christ — "My mother." What society to be in! What about the darkness of the path, if we have the brightness of His smile? Oh! it is better, as the hymnist says,

> "It is better to walk in the dark with God,
> Than walk alone in the light;
> It is better to walk with Him by faith,
> Than walk alone by sight."

Some young man here is suffering fierce temptation. To-day he feels strong; but to-morrow his Sabbath resolutions will desert him. What

will his companions say, if he does not join them? He cannot face them if he is to play the Christian. Companions! What are all the companions in the world to this? What are all the friendships, the truest and the best, to this dear and sacred brotherhood of Christ? "He that doeth the will of My Father, the same is *My* brother."

My mother, my brother, and my sister. He has a sister — some sister here. Sister! Your life is a quiet and even round of common and homely things. You dream, perhaps, of a wider sphere, and sigh for a great and useful life, like some women whose names you know. You question whether it is right that life should be such a little bundle of very little things. But nothing is little that is done for God, and it must be right if it be His will. And if this common life, with its homely things, is God's discipline for you, be assured that in your small corner, your unobserved, your unambitious, your simple woman's lot is very near and very dear to Him Who said, "Whosoever doeth the will of My Father, the same is My sister."

Now we have found the ideal man a Friend. But he wants something more.

(4) He wants *Language*. He must speak to his Friend. He cannot be silent in such company. And speaking to such a Friend is not mere conversation. It has a higher name. It is communion. It is prayer. Well, we listen to

hear the ideal man's prayer. Something about God's will it must be; for that is what he is sure to talk about. That is the object of his life. That is his meat. In that he finds his society. So he will be sure to talk about it. Every one knows what his prayer will be. Every one remembers the words of the ideal prayer: "*Thy will be Done*" (Matt. vi. 10).

Now mark his emphasis on *done*. He prays that God's will may be done. It is not that God's will may be borne, endured, put up with. There is *activity* in his prayer. It is not mere resignation. How often is this prayer toned off with mere endurance, sufferance, passivity. "Thy will be done," people say resignedly. "There is no help for it. We had just as well submit. God evidently means to have His way. Better to give in at once and make the most of it." This is far from the ideal prayer. Well, it is a great thing to say this, but not in this spirit. It may be nobler to suffer God's will than to do it; perhaps it is. But there is nothing noble in resignation of this sort — this resignation under protest as it were. And it disguises the meaning of the prayer, "Thy will be done." It is intensely active. It is not an acquiescence simply in God's dealing. It is a cry for more of God's dealing. God's dealing with me, with everything, with everybody, with the whole world. It is an appeal to the mightiest energy in heaven or earth to work, to make more room for itself,

to energise. It is a prayer that the Almighty energies of the Divine will may be universally known, and felt, and worshipped.

The ideal man has no deeper prayer than this. It is the truest language of his heart. He does not want a bed of roses, or his pathway strewn with flowers. He wants to do God's will. He does not want health or wealth, nor does he covet sickness or poverty — just what God sends. He does not want success — even success in winning souls — or want of success. What God wills for him, that is all. He does not want to prosper in business, or to keep barely struggling on. God knows what is best. He does not want his friends to live, himself to live or die. God's will be done. The currents of his life are deeper than the circumstance of things. There is a deeper principle in it than to live to gratify himself. And so he simply asks, that in the ordinary round of his daily life there may be no desire of his heart more deep, more vivid, more absorbingly present than this, "Thy will be done." He who makes this the prayer of his life will know that of all prayer it is the most truly blessed, the most nearly in the spirit of Him who sought not His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him.

"Lord Jesus, as Thou wilt! if among thorns I go
Still sometimes here and there let a few roses blow.
No! Thou on earth along the *thorny* path hath gone,
Then lead me after Thee, my Lord; Thy will be done."

Schmolk.

(5) But the ideal man does not always pray. There is such perfect blessedness in praying the ideal prayer that language fails him sometimes. The peace of God passes all understanding, much less all expression. It comes down upon the soul, and makes it ring with unutterable joy. And language stops. The ideal man can no longer pray to his Friend. So his prayer changes into *Praise*. He is too full to speak, so his heart bursts into song. Therefore we must find in the Bible the praise of his lips. And who does not remember in the Psalms the song of the ideal man? The huntsmen would gather at night to sing of their prowess in the chase, the shepherd would chant the story of the lion or the bear which he killed as he watched his flocks. But David takes down his harp and sings a sweeter psalm than all: "*Thy Statutes have been my Songs in the House of my pilgrimage*" (Ps. cxix. 54). He knows no sweeter strain. How different from those who think God's law is a stern, cold thing! God's law is His written will. It has no terrors to the ideal man. He is not afraid to think of its sternness and majesty. "I will meditate on Thy laws day and night," he says. He tells us the subject of his thoughts. Ask him what he is thinking about at any time. "Thy laws," he says. How he can please his Master. What more he can bear for Him. What next he can do for Him. He has no other pleasure in life than this. You need not speak to him of the delights of life.

"I will delight myself in Thy statutes," he says. You see what amusements the ideal man has. You see where the sources of his enjoyment are. Praise is the overflow of a full heart. When it is full of enjoyment it overflows; and you can tell the kind of enjoyment from the kind of praise that runs over. The ideal man's praise is of the will of God. He has no other sources of enjoyment. The cup of the world's pleasure has no attraction for him. The delights of life are bitter. Here is his only joy, his only delight (Ps. xl. 8). "I delight to do Thy will, O my God."

(6) The next thing the ideal man wants is *Education.* He needs teaching. He must take his place with the other disciples at his Master's feet. What does he want from the great Teacher? Teach me Wisdom? No. Wisdom is not enough. Teach me what is Truth? No, not even that. Teach me how to do good, how to love, how to trust? No, there is a deeper want than all. "*Teach me to do Thy Will*" (Ps. cxliii. 10). This is the true education. Teach me to do Thy Will. This was the education of Christ. Wisdom is a great study, and truth, and good works, and love, and trust, but there is an earlier lesson — obedience. So the ideal pupil prays, "Teach me to do Thy Will."

And now we have almost gone far enough. These are really all the things the ideal man can need. But in case he should want anything else, God has given the man after his own heart a

promise. God never leaves anything unprovided for. An emergency might arise in the ideal man's life; or he might make a mistake or lose heart, or be afraid to ask his friend for some very great thing he needed, thinking it was too much, or for some very little thing, thinking it unworthy of notice. So God has given.

(7) The ideal *Promise*, "If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us . . . and we know that we have the petitions that we desired from Him" (1 John v. 14). If ye ask anything — no exception — no limit to God's confidence in him. He trusts him to ask right things. He is guiding him, even in what he asks, if he is the man after God's own heart; so God sets no limit to his power. If any one is doing God's will, let him ask anything. It is God's will that he ask anything. Let him put His promise to the test.

Notice here what the true basis of prayer is. The prayer that is answered is the prayer after God's will. And the reason for this is plain. What is God's will is God's wish. And when a man does what God wills, he does what God wishes done. Therefore God will have that done at any cost, at any sacrifice. Thousands of prayers are never answered, simply because God does not wish them. If we pray for any one thing, or any number of things we are sure God wishes, we may be sure our wishes will be gratified. For our wishes are only the reflection of God's. And the wish in us is almost equivalent

to the answer. It is the answer casting its shadow backwards. Already the thing is done in the mind of God. It casts two shadows — one backward, one forward. The backward shadow — that is the wish before the thing is done, which sheds itself in prayer. The forward shadow — that is the joy after the thing is done, which sheds itself in praise. Oh, what a rich and wonderful life this ideal life must be! Asking anything, getting everything, willing with God, praying with God, praising with God. Surely it is too much, this last promise. How can God trust us with a power so deep and terrible? Ah, He can trust the ideal life with anything. "If he ask anything." Well, if he do, he will ask nothing amiss. It will be God's will if it is asked. It will be God's will if it is not asked. For he is come, this man, *to do God's will.*

There is only one thing more which the model man may ever wish to have. We can imagine him wondering, as he thinks of the unspeakable beauty of this life — of its angelic purity, of its divine glory, of its Christ-like unselfishness, of its heavenly peace — how long this life shall last. It may seem too bright and beautiful, for all things fair have soon to come to an end. And if any cloud could cross the true Christian's sky, it would be when he thought that this ideal life might cease. But God, in the riches of His forethought, has rounded off this corner of his life with a great far-reaching text, which looks above

the circumstance of him, and projects his life into the vast Eternity beyond. "*He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever*" (1 John ii. 17).

May God grant that you and I may learn to live this great and holy life, remembering the solemn words of Him who lived it first, who only lived it all: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in Heaven."

NUMBER XII

Penitence

"*And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter . . . and Peter went out and wept bitterly.*" — LUKE xxii. 61, 62.

EVERY man at some time in his life has fallen. Many have fallen many times; few, few times. And the more a man knows his life, and watches its critical flow from day to day, the larger seems to grow the number of these falls, and the oftener reaches out to God his penitential prayer, "Turn yet again, O Lord!"

We have all shuddered before this as we read the tale of Peter's guilt. Many a time we have watched the plot as it thickens round him, and felt the almost unconscious sympathy which betrayed itself. How like the story was to one that had sometimes happened with ourselves. And we knew, as we followed the dreary stages of his fall, that the same well-worn steps had been traced since then by every human foot. How Peter could have slept in the garden, when he should have watched and prayed, all men who have an inner history can understand. The faithlessness that made him follow Christ far off,

instead of keeping at his Master's side, not the best of us will challenge. For we too know what it is sometimes to get out of step with Christ. *We* will be the last to stop and ask his business in that worldly company who warmed themselves by the fire. And none who know that the heart is deceitful above all things will wonder that this man who had lived so long in the inner circle of fellowship with Christ, whose eyes were familiar with miracles, who was one of that most select audience who witnessed the glory of the transfiguration — that this man, when his ears were yet full of the most solemn words the world had ever heard, when his heart was warm still with Communion-table thoughts, should have turned his back upon his Lord, and, almost ere the sacramental wine was dry upon his lips, have cursed Him to His face. Such things, alas! are not strange to those who know the parts in the appalling tragedy of sin.

But there is a greater fact in Peter's life than Peter's sin — a much less known fact — Peter's penitence. All the world are at one with Peter in his sin; but not all the world are with him in his penitence. Sinful Peter is one man, and Repentant Peter is another; and many who have kept his company along these worn steps to sin have left him to trace the tear-washed path of penitence alone. But the real lesson in Peter's life is the lesson in repentance. His fall is a lesson in sin which requires no teacher, but his

repentance is a great lesson in salvation. And Peter's penitence is full of the deepest spiritual meaning to all who have ever made Peter's discovery — that they have sinned.

The few words which form the pathetic sequel to the tale of Peter's sin may be defined as the "ideal progress of Christian penitence." They contain materials for the analysis of the most rare and difficult grace in spiritual experience. And lying underneath these two simple sentences are the secrets of some of the most valuable spiritual laws. We find here four outstanding characteristics of the state of penitence:

(1) It is a *divine thing*. It began with God. Peter did not turn. But "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter."

(2) It is a *very sensitive thing*. A look did it. The Lord . . . looked upon Peter.

(3) It is a *very intense thing*. Peter went out and wept bitterly.

(4) It is a *very lonely thing*. Peter *went out* — out into the quiet night, to be alone with his sin and God.

These are characteristic not only of the penitential state, but of all God's operations on the soul.

(1) To take the first of these, we find that the beginning of this strange experience came from God. It was not Peter who turned. The Lord turned and looked upon Peter. When the cock crew, that might have recalled him to himself; he

was just in the very act of sin. And when a man is in the thick of his sin his last thought is to throw down his arms and repent. So Peter never thought of turning, but the Lord turned; and when Peter would rather have looked anywhere else than at the Lord, the Lord looked at Peter. And this scarce-noticed fact is a great sermon to every one who sins — that the Lord turns first.

Now the result of this distinction is this: that there are two kinds of sorrow for sin. And these are different in their origin, in their religious value, and in their influence on our life. The commoner kind is when a man does wrong, and, in the ordinary sense of the word, is sorry that he has done it. We are always easier in such a case when sorrow comes. It seems to provide a sort of guarantee that we are not disposed to do the same again, and that our better self is still alive enough to enter its protest against the sin the lower self has done. And we count this feeling of reproach which treads so closely on the act as a sort of compensation or atonement for the wrong. This is a kind of sorrow which is well known to all who examine themselves, and in any way struggle with sin. It is a kind of sorrow which is coveted by all who examine themselves; which gives relief to what is called a penitential heart, and lends a fervour to many a penitential prayer. But it is a startling truth that there is no *religion* in such a state. There is no real penitence there. It may not contain even one ingre-

dient of true repentance. It is all many know of repentance, and all many have for repentance. But it is no true sorrow for sin. It is wounded self-love. It is sorrow that we were weak enough to sin. We thought we had been stronger men and women, and when we were put to the test we found to our chagrin that we had failed. And this chagrin is what we are apt to mistake for penitence. But it is no Divine gift or grace, this penitence — it is merely wounded pride — sorrow that we did not do better, that we were not so good as ourselves and our neighbours thought. It is just as if Peter turned and looked upon Peter. And when Peter turns and looks upon Peter he sees what a poor, weak creature Peter is. And if God had not looked upon Peter he might have wept well-nigh as bitterly, not because he had sinned against his God, but because he, the great apostle, had done a weak thing — he was weak as other men.

The fit of low spirits which comes to us when we find ourselves overtaken in a fault, though we flatter ourselves to reckon it a certain sign of penitence, and a set-off to the sin itself which God will surely take into account, is often nothing more than vexation and annoyance with ourselves, that, after all our good resolutions and attempts at reformation, we have broken down again.

Contrast for a moment with such a penitence the publican's prayer of penitence in the temple.

It was no chagrin nor wounded pride with him. And we feel as we read the story that the Lord must have turned and looked upon the publican, when he cried "God" — as if God were looking right down into the man's eyes — "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" Stricken before his God, this publican had little thought of the self-respect he had lost, and felt it no indignity to take the culprit's place and be taught the true divinity of a culprit's penitence.

Now it will be seen at once that the difference between the publican's penitence and the first-named sorrow is just the difference between the human and the Divine. The one is God turning and looking upon man, the other is man turning and looking upon himself. There is no *wrong* in a man turning and looking upon himself — only there is danger. There is the danger of misinterpreting what he sees and what he feels. What he feels is the mortification, the self-reproach of the sculptor who has made an unlucky stroke of the chisel; the chagrin of the artist who has spoilt the work of weeks by a clumsy touch. Apart altogether from religion we must feel mortified when we do wrong. Life, surely, is a work of art; character-building, soul-culture, is the highest kind of art; and it would be strange indeed if failure passed unresented by the mind.

But what is complained of is not that it passes unresented by the mind, but that it passes unresented by the soul. Penitence of some sort there

must be, but in the one case it is spiritual, in the other purely artistic. And the danger is the more subtle because the higher the character is, the more there must necessarily be of the purely artistic penitence.

The effect is, that self gets in to what ought to be the most genuine experience of life, makes the most perfect imitation of it, and transforms the greatest opportunities for recovery into the basest ministry to pride. The true experience, on the other hand, is a touching lesson in human helplessness; teaching him God has to come to man's relief at every turn of his life, and how the same hand which provides his pardon has actually to draw him to the place of penitence.

It is God looking into the sinner's face that has introduced a Christian element into human sorrow. And Paul, in making the Christian vocabulary, had to coin a word which was strange to all the philosophies of the world then, and is so still, when he joined the conceptions of God and Sorrow into one, and told us of the Godly-sorrow which had the marvellous virtue of working repentance not to be repented of. And it is this new and sacred sorrow which comes to sinful men as often as the Lord turns and looks upon their life; it is this which adds the penitential incense of true penitence to the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart. That was a great distinction which Luke brings out, in the prodigal's life, between coming to himself and coming to his

father. "He came to himself," and then, says Luke, "he came to his father." So we are always coming to ourselves. We are always finding out, like the prodigal, the miserable bargains we have made. But it is only when we come to our Father that we can get them undone and the real debt discharged.

(2) But now, secondly, we come to the sensitiveness of penitence. Or rather, perhaps, we should talk of the sensitiveness of the penitent human soul. The Lord turned and looked upon Peter. There is nothing more sensitive in all the world than a human soul which has once been quickened into its delicate life by the touch of the divine. Men seldom estimate aright the exquisite beauty and tenderness of a sinner's heart. We apply coarse words to move it, and coarse, harsh stimulants to beat it into life. And if no answer comes we make the bludgeon heavier and the language coarser still, as if the soul were not too fine to respond to weapons so blunt as these. There is coarseness in the fibres of the body, and these may be moved by blows; and there is coarseness in human nature, and that may be roused with threats; but the soul is fine as a breath, and will preserve, through misery and cruelty and sin, the marvellous delicacy which tells how near it lies to the spirit of God who gave it birth. Peter was naturally, perhaps, the coarsest of all the disciples. Our picture of him is of a strong-built, sun-tanned fisherman, robust

and fearless in disposition, quick-tempered and rash, a man who would bluster and swear — as we know he did — a wild man who had the making of a memorable sinner had not God made him a memorable saint. But inside this wild breast there lay a most lovely and delicate plant — the most tender plant, perhaps, but one which God had growing on the earth. With His own hand He had placed it there. With His own breath He nourished it from day to day; and already the storms in the wild breast were calmed and tempered for the holy flower which had begun to send a perfume through even coarse Peter's life. It always purifies a man to have a soul, and there is no such beauty of character as that which comes out in unconscious ways from a life made fine by Christ.

So God did not thunder and lighten to make Peter hear His voice. God knew that though Peter was blustering and swearing with his lips, there was dead silence in his soul. A whisper at that moment — that moment of high-strung feeling — a whisper, even at that moment, was not fine enough in its touch for this exquisitely sensitive spirit; so the Lord turned and *looked*. A look, and that was all. But it rent his heart as lightning could not, and melted into his soul.

There is a text in the Psalms which uses the strange expression of "the *gentleness*" of God. We wonder sometimes when God is so great, so terrible in majesty, that He uses so little violence

with us, who are so small. But it is not His way. His way is to be gentle. He seldom drives; but draws. He seldom compels; but leads. He remembers we are dust. We think it might be quicker work if God threatened and compelled us to do right. But God does not want quick work, but good work. God does not want slave work, but free work. So God is gentle with us all — moulding us and winning us many a time with no more than a silent look. Coarse treatment never wins souls. So God did not drive the chariot of His omnipotence up to Peter and command him to repent. God did not threaten him with the thunderbolts of punishment. God did not even speak to him. That one look laid a spell upon his soul which was more than voice or language through all his after life.

Here, then, are two great lessons — the gentleness of God, and the gentleness of the soul — the one as divine a marvel as the other. God may be dealing with us in some quiet way just now, and we not knowing it. So mysteriously has all our life been shaped, and so unobtrusive the fingers which mould our will, that we scarce believe it has been the hand of God at all. But it is God's gentleness. And the reason why God made Peter's heart sensitive, and yours and mine, was to meet this gentleness of His.

Yes; we misunderstand God altogether, and religion, if we think God deals coarsely with our souls. If we ask ourselves what things have

mainly influenced our life, we find the answer in a few silent voices which have preached to us, and winds which passed across our soul so gently that we scarce could tell when they were come or gone. The great physical forces of the world are all silent and unseen. The most ponderous of all — gravitation — came down the ages with step so noiseless that centuries of wise men had passed away before an ear was quick enough to detect its footfall. And the great spiritual forces which startle men into thoughts of God and right, which make men remember, in the rush of the world's life, that they have souls, which bring eternity near to us, when time is yet sweet and young, are not the warnings from the dead who drop at our side so much, nor the threats of judgment to come, nor the retributions of the life that is; but still small voices, which penetrate like Peter's look from Christ, and turn man's sensitive heart to God. The likeness of a long-dead mother's face, the echo of a children's hymn laden with pure memories, coming over the guilty years which lie between, the fragments of an old, forgotten text. These are the messengers which Heaven sends to call the world to God. Let those who are waiting for Christ to *thunder* at their door before they will let Him in, remember that the quiet service of the Sabbath Day, and the soft whisper of text and Psalm, and the plaint of conscience, and the deep, deep heart-wish to be whole, are Christ's ways of looking for them. Let workers for Christ remember this.

In our soul, let us think how God may be turning and looking upon us, and searching our hearts, like Peter's, for signs of penitence.

Let those who try to keep their influence for Christ, ponder Christ's methods of influence. Let those who live in the shade, whose lives are naturally bounded by timidity and reserve, be glad that, in the genius of Christianity, there is a place for even the Gospel of the Face. And let those who live in the battle, when coarser weapons fail, discern the lesson of Elijah: — "A great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; *but the Lord was not in the wind:* and after the wind, an earthquake; *but the Lord was not in the earthquake:* and after the earthquake a fire; *but the Lord was not in the fire:* and after the fire a still small voice" (1 Kings xix. 11).

(3) Thirdly and briefly, for the truth is obvious, we learn from Peter's recovery that spiritual experience is *intense.* Peter wept bitterly. And this short sentence for ever settles the question of emotion in religion. When the Lord turned and looked upon Peter, and memory crushed into one vivid moment the guilt of those never-to-be-forgotten hours, what else could Peter do than weep bitterly? Let memory so work on any of our lives to-day, and let the eye of the Eternal bring the naked truth from out our past, and let us ask if "bitterly" is a word too strong to express the agony of God's discovery of our sin. Much

need, indeed, had Peter to weep bitterly; and if there are no bitter tears betimes in our religious life, it is not because we have less of Peter's sin, but little of Peter's grace.

It is vain to console ourselves by measuring, as we try to do, the small size of the slips we make as compared with his. There is such a thing in the world as a great sin, but there is no such thing as a small sin. The smallest sin is a fall, and a fall is a fall from God, and to fall from God is to fall the greatest height in the universe. The publicity of a sin has nothing to do with its size. Our fall last week, or yesterday, or to-day, was just as great, perhaps, as Peter's fall, or David's, or Noah's, or Jacob's, or the many private sins which history has made public examples, or the Bible placed as beacons to all the race.

Every sin that was ever done demands a bitter penitence. And if there is little emotion in a man's religion, it is because there is little introspection. Religion without emotion is religion without reflection. *Religion without emotion is religion without reflection.* Let a man sit calmly down to think about his life. Let him think how God has dealt with him since ever he lisped God's name. Let him add to that how he has dealt with God since ever he could sin. And as he turns over the secrets of the past, and forgotten sins come crowding one by one into his thoughts, can he help a strong emotion rising in his heart, and shedding itself in tears? Yes;

religion without emotion is religion without reflection. And, conversely, the man who gives himself to earnest thought upon his ways will always have enough emotion to generate religious fervour in his soul.

Only let religious emotion run in the right channel, let it work itself out in action and not in excited feeling, let it be something more than nervous agitation or a mere fear, and there is no experience more purifying to the soul. No doubt it was a great thing for Peter that he wept bitterly, and no doubt from the bitterness of that night of penitence came much of the sweetness that hallowed his after life.

(4) Fourthly, and lastly, penitence is a lonely thing. Peter went out. When the Lord turned He looked upon *Peter*. No one else noticed the quiet glance that was exchanged. But it did its work. It singled out one man in a moment, and cut him off from all the rest of the world. "*And Peter went out.*" And there was no man beneath the firmament of God that night so much alone as Peter with his sin.

Men know two kinds of loneliness it has been said — a loneliness of space and a loneliness of spirit. The fisherman in his boat on the wide sea knows loneliness of space. But it is no true loneliness. For his thoughts have peopled his boat with forms of those he loves. But Peter's was loneliness of spirit. A distance wider than the wide sea cut off the denier from all fellowship

of man, and left him to mourn alone. All this is spiritual truth.

When God speaks He likes no other voice to break the stillness but His own. And hence the place that has always been given to solitude in all true religious life. It can be overdone, but it can be grossly underdone. And there is no lesson more worth insisting on in days like ours than this, that when God wants to speak with a man He wants that man to be alone. And God develops the germ of the recluse enough in all true Christian hearts to see that it is done. "Talent forms itself in solitude," says the German poet; "character amidst the storms of life." And if religious character is developed and strengthened in the battle of the world, it is no less true that religious talents are cultivated in quiet contemplation and communion alone with God. Than the worshippers who do all their religion in public there are none more profoundly to be pitied; and he who knows not what it is to go out from the crowd sometimes and be alone with God is a stranger to the most Divine experience that comes to sanctify a Christian's heart.

But what gave the beauty to Peter's loneliness was this — that he took God's time to be alone. Peter's penitence was not only an intense thing and a lonely thing, it was an immediate thing. Peter need not have gone out that time. He might have stood where he was, and braved it

out. God has looked at us when we were sinning; and we did not do as Peter did. He lost no time between his penitence and his sin. But we spoil the grace of our penitence many a time by waiting till the sin grows old. We do it on purpose. Time seems to smooth the roughness off our sin and take its bitterness away. And we postpone our penitence till we think the edge is off the sharpness of the wrong. As if time, as if eternity could ever make a sinner's sin less black. Sin is always at its maximum. And no man ever gets off with penitence at its minimum. The time for penitence is just the time when we have sinned. And that perhaps is now. Peter's penitence came sharp upon his sin. It was not on his death-bed or in his after life. But just when he had sinned. Many a man who postpones his penitence till he cannot help it, postpones his penitence till it cannot help him, and will not see the Lord turning till He turns and looks upon him in judgment. Then, indeed, he goes out to weep. But it is out into that night which knows no dawn.

Such are the lessons from Peter's penitence. Just one word more.

When God speaks He speaks so loud that all the voices of the world seem dumb. And yet when God speaks He speaks so softly that no one hears the whisper but yourself. To-day, perhaps, as the service has gone on, the Lord has turned and looked on some one here. And

the soul of some one has gone out to weep. No one noticed where the Lord's glance fell, and no one knows in the church that it was — *you*. You sit there in your wonted place. But your spirit is far away just now, dealing with some old sin, and God is giving you a lesson Himself — the bitterest, yet the sweetest lesson of your life, in heartfelt penitence. Come not back into the crowd till the Lord has turned and looked on you again, as He looked at the thief upon the cross, and you have beheld the "glory of the love of God in the face of Jesus."

NUMBER XIII

What is God's Will?

"The God of our fathers hath chosen thee that thou shouldest know His will." — ACTS xxii. 14.

LAST Sunday evening I was trying to show you that the end of religion was to do the will of God. Some time ago I showed you likewise that the *end of life* was to do the will of God, and that the end of Christ's life lay in this too. "I come," He said, "to do the will of Him that sent Me."

We resume to-day a subject, the thread of which has been broken by the interval of a few Sabbaths — the subject of the Will of God.

Already we have tried to learn two lessons: —

1. That the end of our life is to do the will of God.

2. That this was the end of Christ's life.

It will help to recall what has gone before if we compare this with another definition of the end of life with which we are all familiar.

Of course this is not the most complete statement of the end of our life; but it is the most

practical, and it will recall the previous conclusions if we refer to this for a moment.

Our Shorter Catechism, for instance, puts the end of life quite in different words. "Man's chief end," it says, "is to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever." But this answer is just too great for us. There is too much in it. It is really the same answer, but turned towards God. It is too great to understand. It is as true, but too profoundly true. It is wonderfully conceived and put together, but it goes past us. It expresses the end of life God-ward — determines the quality of all the things we do by the extent to which they make way in the world for the everywhere coming glory of God. But this is too wonderful for us. We want a principle *life-ward* as well as God-ward. We want something to tell us what to do with the things beneath us and around us and within us, as well as the things above us. Therefore there is a human side to the Shorter Catechism's answer.

What is the chief end of man?

Man's chief end is to do the will of God.

In one sense this is not such a Divine answer. But we are not divine. We understand God's *will* — God's *glory* only faintly. We are only human yet, and "glory" is a word for heaven.

Ask a schoolboy, learning the first question in the Catechism, to do a certain thing for the glory of God. The opportunity of doing the thing may be gone before the idea can be driven into

the boy's head of what the glory of God means. But tell him to do the thing because it is God's will that he should do it — he understands that. He knows that God's will is just what God likes, and what he himself probably does *not* like. And the conception of it from this side is so clear that no schoolboy even need miss the end of life — for that is simply doing what God likes. If our souls are not great enough, then, to think of God's glory as the practical rule of life, let them not be too small to think of God's will. And if we look after the end of life from this side, God will from the other. Do we the will of God, God will see that it glorifies God.

Let us suppose, then, that after casting about for an object in life, we have at last stopped at this — the end of my life is to do the will of God. Let us suppose also that we have got over the disappointment of finding that there is nothing *higher* for us to do in the world. Or, perhaps, taking the other side, suppose we are beginning to feel the splendid conviction that, after all, our obscure life is not to be wasted: that having this ideal principle within it, it may yet be as great in its homely surroundings as the greatest human life — seeing that no man can do more with his life than the will of God — that though we may never be famous or powerful or called to heroic suffering or acts of self-denial which will vibrate through history: that though we are neither intended to be apostles nor missionaries nor

martyrs, but to be common people living in common houses, spending the day in common offices or common kitchens, yet doing the will of God *there*, we shall do as much as apostle or missionary or martyr — seeing that they can do no more than do God's will where they are, even as we can do as much where we are — and answer the end of our life as truly, faithfully, and triumphantly as they.

Suppose we feel all this, and desire, as we stand on the threshold of the truly ideal life, that, God helping us, we shall live it if we may, we are met at once with the question, How are we ever to know what the will of God can be? The chief end of life is to do the will of God. *Question:* How am I to know the will of God — to know it clearly and definitely? Is it possible? and if so, how?

Now, to begin with, we have probably an opinion on the matter already. And if you were to express it, it would be this: that it is *not* possible. You have thought about the will of God, and read and thought, and thought and read, and you have come to this conclusion, that the will of God is a very mysterious thing — a very mysterious thing, which some people *may* have revealed to them, but does not seem in any way possible to you.

Your nature is different from other people's; and though you have strained your eyes in prayer and thought, you have never seen the will of God yet. And if you ever have been in the same line

with it, it has only been by chance, for you can see no principle in it, nor any certainty of ever being in the same line again. One or two special occasions, indeed, you can recall when you think you were near the will of God, but they must have been special interpositions on God's part. He does not show His will every day like that: once or twice only in a lifetime, that is enough of this high experience one ever dare expect.

Now, of course, if this is true, it is clearly no use going on to find out what God's will is if the thing is impossible. If this experience is correct — and we cannot know God's will for the mystery of it — we may as well give up the ideal life at once. But if you examined this experience, even cursorily, you would find at once how far away from the point it was.

1. In the first place, it is merely an *experience;* it is exclusively based on *your own experience*, not on God's thoughts regarding it, but on your own thoughts. The true name for this is *presumption.*

2. It assumes that, the end of life being to do God's will, and you not being able to know God's will, are therefore not responsible for fulfilling the end of life. This is *self-deception.*

3. It suggests the idea that God could teach you His will if He liked, seeing that He had done so once or twice by your own admission. And yet, though He wants you to do His will, and you want it too, He deliberately refuses to tell you what it is. This is an *accusation against God.*

It is something worse than unreasonable, therefore, to say that we think it hopeless for us ever to know God's will. On the contrary, indeed, there is a strong presumption that we *should* find it out. For if it is so important a thing that the very end of life is involved in it, it would be absurd to imagine that God should keep us even the least in the dark as to what His will may mean.

And this presumption is changed into a certainty when we balance our minds for a moment on the terms of this text. "The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know His will." It is not simply a matter of presumption, it is a matter of *election*. Have you ever thought of this strange, deep calling of God? We are called to salvation, we have thought of that; we are called to holiness, we have thought of that; but as great as either is this, we are called to know God's will. We are answering our call in other ways; are we answering it in this: What is God's will? *Are* we knowing God's will? How much have we learned of that to which we have been called? And is it our prayer continually, as it was his to whom these words were said, that we may be "filled with the knowledge of His will"?

It is a reasonable object of search, then, to find out what God's will for us may be. And it is a reasonable expectation that we may find it out so fully as to know at any moment whether we be

in the line of it or no; and when difficulty arises about the next step of our life, we may have absolute certainty which way God's will inclines. There are many kinds of assurance in religion; and it is as important to have assurance of God's will as to have assurance of God's salvation. For just as the loss of assurance of salvation means absence of peace and faith, and usefulness, so absence of assurance of God's will means miserable Christian life, imperfect Christian character, and impaired Christian usefulness.

We start our investigation, therefore, in the belief that God *must* have light for all of us on the subject of His will, and with the desire to have assurance in the guidance of our life by God as clear and strong as of its redemption and salvation by Christ.

In one sense, of course, no man can know the will of God, even as in one sense no man can know God Himself. God's will is a great and infinite mystery — a thing of mighty mass and volume, which can no more be measured out to hungry souls in human sentences than the eternal knowledge of God or the boundless love of Christ. But even as there is a sense in which one poor human soul can hold enough of the eternal knowledge of God and the boundless love of Christ, so is there a sense in which God can put as much of His will into human words as human hearts can bear — as much as human wills can will or human lives perform.

When we come to put this will into human words we find that it divides itself into two great parts.

I. There is a part of God's will which every one may know — *a universal part.*

II. A part of God's will which no one knows but you — *a particular part.*

(1) A universal part — for every one. (2) A particular part — for the individual.

I. To begin with the first. There is a part of God's will which every one may know. It is written in Divine characters in two sacred books, which every man may read. The one of them is the Bible, the other is Nature. The Bible is God's will in words, in formal thoughts, in grace. Nature is God's will in matter and tissue and force. Nature is not often considered a part of God's will. But it is a part, and a great part, and the first part. And perhaps one reason why some never know the second is because they yield no full obedience to the first. God's law of progress is from the lower to the higher; and scant obedience at the beginning of His will means disobedience with the rest. The laws of nature are the will of God for our bodies. As there is a will of God for our higher nature — the moral laws — as emphatically is there a will of God for the lower — the natural laws. If you would know God's will in the higher, therefore, you must begin with God's will in the lower: which simply means this — that if you want to live the ideal

life, you must begin with the ideal body. The law of moderation, the law of sleep, the law of regularity, the law of exercise, the law of cleanliness — this is the law or will of God for you. This is the first law, the beginning of will for you. And if we are ambitious to get on to do God's will in the higher reaches, let us respect it as much in the lower; for there may be as much of God's will in minor things, as much of God's will in taking good bread and pure water, as in keeping a good conscience or living a pure life. Who ever heard of gluttony doing God's will, or laziness, or uncleanness, or the man who was careless and wanton of natural life? Let a man disobey God in these, and you have no certainty that he has any true principle for obeying God in anything else: for God's will does not only run in to the church and the prayer-meeting and the higher chambers of the soul, but into the common rooms at home down to wardrobe and larder and cellar, and into the bodily frame down to blood and muscle and brain.

This, then, is the first contribution to the contents of the will of God. And, for distinction, they may be called the *physical contents.*

Next in order we come to the *moral contents,* both of these coming under the same head as parts of God's will which every one may know.

These moral contents, as we have seen, are contained in the word of God; and the Bible has a

variety of names for them, such as **testimonies,** laws, precepts, statutes, commandments.

Now this is a much more formidable array than the physical contents. It is one thing to be in physical condition — a prize-fighter may be that, though not in a religious way — but it is quite another to be in moral condition. And it is a difficult matter to explain exactly what God's will in this great sense is; for, on the one hand, there is the danger of elevating it so high as to frighten the timid soul from ever attempting to reach it, and on the other the insensible tendency to lower it to human standards and aims.

It must be understood, however, to the full that, as far as its formidableness is concerned, *that* is absolutely unchangeable. God's moral law cannot be toned down into anything less binding, less absolutely moral, less infinitely significant. Whatever it means, is meant for every man in its rigid truth as the definite and formal expression of God's will for him.

From the moral side there are three different departments of God's will. Foremost, and apparently most rigid of all, are the Ten Commandments. Now the Ten Commandments contain, in a few sentences, one of the largest-known portions of God's will. They form the most strict code of morality in the world: the basis of all others, the most venerable and universal expression of the will of God for man.

Following upon this (2) there come the Beatitudes of Christ. This is another large portion of God's will. This forms the most unique code of morality in the world, the most complete and lovely additional expression of the will of God for Christians. Passing through the human heart of Christ, the older commandment of the Creator becomes the soft and mellow beatitude of the Saviour — passes from the colder domain of law with a penalty on failure, to the warm region of love with a benediction on success. These are the two chief elements in the moral part of the will of God for man. But there is a third set of laws and rules, which are not to be found exactly expressed in either of these. The Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes take up most of the room in God's will, but there are shades of precept still unexpressed which also have their place. Hence we must add to all this mass of law and beatitude many more laws and many more beatitudes which lie enclosed in other texts, and other words of Christ, which have their place like the rest as portions of God's will.

Here, then, we already know a great part of what God's will is; although, perhaps, we have not often called it by this name. And it may be worth while, before going on to find out any more, to pause for a moment and find out how to practise this.

For, perhaps, when we see how great a thing

it is, this will of God, our impulse for the moment is to wish we had not known. We were building ourselves up with the idea that we were going to try this life, and that it was easy and smooth compared with the life we left. There was a better future opening to us, with visions of happiness and holiness and even of usefulness to God. But our hopes are dashed now. How *can* we do God's will? — this complicated mass of rules and statutes, each bristling with the certainty of a thousand breakages. How can we keep these ten grave laws, with their unflinching scorn of compromise and exacting obligation, to the uttermost jot and tittle? How can our coarse spirits breathe the exquisite air of these beatitudes, or fit our wayward wills to the narrow mould of all these binding texts? Can God know how weak we are, and blind and biassed towards the breakages, ere ever we thought of Him? Can He think how impossible it is to keep these laws, even for one close-watched, experimental hour? Did Christ really mean it — not some lesser thing than this — when He taught in the ideal prayer that God's will was to be done on earth *even as* it is done in heaven?

There can be but one answer. "God hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know His will." And God expects from each of us neither less nor more than this. He knows the frailty of our frame; He remembers we are dust. And

yet *such* dust that He has given each of us the divinest call to the vastest thing in heaven. There, by the side of our frailty, He lays down His holy will — lays it down confidingly, as if a child could take it in its grasp, and, as if He mean the child to fondle it and bear it in its breast, He says, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words."

There must be something, therefore, to ease the apparent hopelessness of doing this will of God — something to give us heart to go on with it, to give strength to obey God's call. We were not prepared to find it running in to the roots of things like this; but there must be something brighter somewhere than the dark side we have seen. Well, then, let us think for a moment on these points.

1. In the first place, there *must* be such laws. God is a King — His kingdom the kingdom of heaven. His people are His subjects. Subjects must have laws. Therefore we start with a *necessity*. Laws *must be*. But

2. Who are afraid of law? Good subjects? Never. *Criminals* are afraid of laws. Who dread the laws of this country, who cry out against them, would abolish them if they could? Drunkards, thieves, murderers. Who love the laws of this country? The honest, the wise and good. Then who are afraid of God's laws — would abolish them if they could? The wicked, the profligate, the licentious. But *you* would

not. The just and holy, the pure in heart and life love them, respect them. More still, they demand them. It would be no kingdom without them — no kingdom worth belonging to. If it were not for its laws of truth and purity, and its promise of protection from unrighteousness and sin, it would have no charm for them. It is the inaccessible might and purity of will in the kingdom of God that draws all other wills as subjects to its sway. It is not only not hard, therefore, that there should be such elements in God's will as law; it is a privilege. And it is more than a privilege to have them. For

3. It is a privilege to do them. And it is a peculiar privilege this. It consists partly in forgetting that they are laws — in changing their names, commandment, precept, testimony, statute, into this — the will of God. No sternness then can enter with the thought, for God's name is in the name and the help of God, and the power of God, and the constraining love of Christ. This takes away the hopelessness of trying to keep God's will. It makes it a personal thing, a relation to a living will, not to didactic law.

And there is, further, a wonderful provision near it. When God puts down His great will beside me, telling me to do it, He puts down just beside it as great a thing, His Love. And as my soul trembles at the fearfulness of will, Love comes with its calm omnipotence, and

draws it to itself; then takes my timid will and twines it around His, till mine is fierce with passion to serve, and strong to do His will. Just as if some mighty task was laid to an infant's hand, and the engine-grasp of a giant strengthened it with his own. Where God's law is, is God's love. Look at Law — it withers your very soul with its stern, inexorable face. But look at Love, or look at God's will, which means look at Love's will, and you are re-assured, and your heart grows strong. No martyr dies for abstract truth. For a person, for God, he will die a triple death. So no man will die for God's law. But for God he will do it. Where God's will, then, seems strong to command, God's love is strong to obey. Hence the profound text, "Love is the fulfilling of the law. And this is the love of God that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not grievous."

God's will, then, is as great as God, as high as heaven, yet as easy as love. For love knows no hardness, and feels no yoke. It desires no yielding to its poverty in anything it loves. Let God be greater, and His will sterner, love will be stronger and obedience but more true. Let not God come down to me, slacken truth for me, make His will weaker for me: my interests, as subject, are safer with my King, are greater with the greatness of my King — only give me love, pure, burning love and loyalty to Him, and I shall climb from law to law through grace and

glory to the place beside the throne where the angels do His will.

There are two ways, therefore, of looking at God's will — one looking at the love side of it, the other at the law; the one ending in triumph, the other in despair; the one a liberty, the other a slavery. And you might illustrate this in a simple way, to make it finally clear — for this is the hardest point to hold — in some such way as this: —

Suppose you go into a workshop occasionally, and watch the workmen at their task. The majority do their work in an uninterested, mechanical sort of way. Everything is done with the most proper exactness and precision — almost with slavish precision, a narrower watch would say. They come *exactly* at the hour in the morning, and throw down their work to a second *exactly* when the closing bell has rung. There is a certain *punctiliousness* about them, and a *scrupulosity* about their work, and as part cause of it, perhaps, you observe an uncomfortable turning of the head occasionally as if some eye was upon them, then a dogged going on of their work again, as if it were always done under some restraint.

But among the workmen you will notice one who seems to work on different principles. There is a buoyancy and cheerfulness about him as he goes about his work, which is foreign to all the rest. You will see him at his place sometimes even *before* the bell has rung, and if unfin-

ished work be in his hands when closing time has come, he does not mind an extra five minutes when all the others are gone. What strikes you about him is the absence of that *punctiliousness* which marked the other's work. It does not seem at all a tyranny to him, but even a freedom and a pleasure; and though he is apparently not so mechanical in his movements as his mates, his work seems better done and greater, despite the ease and light-heartedness which mark him through its course. Now the difference between them is this. The first set of men are hired workmen. The man by himself is *the master's son.* Not that he is outwardly different; he is a common workman in a fustian jacket like the rest. But he is *the master's son.* The first set work for wages, come in at regulation hours, lest aught be kept off their wages, keep the workshop laws, in terror of losing their place. But the son keeps them, and keeps them better, not for wages, but for *love.*

So the Christian keeps the will or the laws of God because of the love of God. Not because they are workshop regulations framed and hung up before him at every moment of his life, but because they are his Master's will. They are as natural to him as air. He would never think of not keeping them. His meat is to do the will of his Father which is in heaven. There is no room for punctiliousness in this the true way of doing God's will. A scrupulous Christian is a *hired servant* and *not* the Master's son.

II. But now, very briefly, in the second and last place, there is an unknown part of God's will — at least, a part which is only known to *you*. There is God's will for the world, and God's will for the individual. There is God's will written on tables of stones for all the world to read. There is God's will carved in sacred hieroglyphic which no one reads but you. There is God's will rolling in thunder over the life of universal man. There is God's will dropped softly on the believer's ear in angel whispers or the still small voice of God. This, the final element in God's will, to distinguish it from the moral and physical contents which go before, one might call the more strictly *spiritual* content.

This is a distinct addition to the other parts — an addition, too, which many men ignore, and other men deny. But there *is* such a region in God's will — a region unmapped in human charts, unknown to human books, a region for the pure in heart, for the upright, for the true. It is a land of mystery to those who know it not, a land of foolishness, and weaknesses, and delusive sights and sounds. But there *is* a land where the Spirit moves, a luminous land, a walking in God's light. There *is* where God's own people have their breathing from above, where each saint's *steps* are ordered of the Lord.

Now this region may be distinguished from the other regions. For one thing, by its *secrecy*. It is a private thing; between God and you. You

want to know what to do next — your calling in life, for instance. You want to know what action to take in a certain matter. You want to know what to do with your money. You want to know whether to go into a certain scheme or not. Then you enter into this private chamber of God's will, and ask the private question, "Lord, what wouldest thou have *me* to do?"

Then it is distinguished by its action. It concerns a different department of our life. The first part of God's will, all that has gone before, affects our *character*. But this affects something more. It affects our *career*. And this is an important distinction. A man's career in life is almost as important as his character in life; that is to say, it is almost as important to God, which is the real question. If character is the end of life, then the ideal career is just where character can best be established and developed, which means that a man is to live for his character. But if God's will is the end of life, God may have a will for my career as well as for my character, which does not mean that a man is to live for his career, but for God's will *in* his character *through* his career.

I may want to put all my work upon my character. But God may want my work for something else. He may want to use me, for instance; I may not know why, or when, or how, or to whom. But it is possible He may need me, for something or other at some time or other. It may be all through my life, or at some particular part

of my life which may be past now, or may be still to come. At all events, I must hold myself in readiness and let Him trace my path; for though it does not look now as if He had anything for me to do, the next turn of the road may bring it; so I must watch the turnings of the road for God. Even for the *chance* of God needing me it is worth while doing this — the chance of Him needing me even *once*. There is a man in Scripture whom God perhaps used but *once*. He may have done many other things for God; still, there was one thing God gave him to do so far overshadowing all other things that he seems to have done but this. He seems, indeed, to have been born, to have lived and died for this. It is the only one thing we know about him. But it is a great thing. His name was Ananias. He was the instrument in the conversion of Paul. What was he doing in Damascus that day, when Paul arrived under conviction of sin? Why was he living in Damascus at all? Because he was born there, and his father before him, perhaps you will say. Let it be so. A few will be glad to cherish a higher thought. He was a good man, and his steps were ordered — by ordinary means, if you like — by the Lord. Could Ananias not have been as good a man in Jericho, or Antioch, or Ephesus? Quite as good. His *character* might almost have been the same. But his *career* would have been different. And, *possibly*, his character might have been different

from the touch of God upon his career. For when God comes into a man's career, it sometimes makes a mighty difference on his character — teaches him to live less for character and for himself, and more for his career and for God, rather more for both — more for his character by living more for his career. Gold is gold wherever it is; but it is *some* difference to the world whether it make a communion cup or gild the proscenium of a theatre.

There is a difference, then, between God in character and God in career. You may have God in your character without having God in your career. Perhaps you should have been in London to-day, perhaps in China. Perhaps you should have been a missionary; perhaps you should be one yet. Perhaps you should have been in poorer circumstances, or in a different business altogether. Perhaps you have chosen a broader path than God would have willed for you. Your character may not *seem* to have suffered; but your career has. You may be doing God's will with one hand consecrated to Christ, and making your own autobiography with the other consecrated to self.

Would you know the will of God, then? Consult God about your career. It does not follow because He has done nothing with you last week or last year, He may have nothing for you now. God's will in career is mostly an unexpected thing — it comes as a surprise. God's servants work on short notices. Paul used to have to go off to

what was the end of the world in those days, on a few hours' warning. And so may you and I. It is not a thing to startle us, to make us alarmed at, to make us say, "If this might be the upshot we would let God's will alone." It would be a wonderful privilege to come to you or me; yes, a wonderful privilege that He should count us worthy to suffer this or anything more for Him.

But you are old, you say. Ananias was old. Or steeped in a profession. Paul was steeped in a profession. Or you are inexperienced and young. A *lad* came to Jesus once with five loaves and two small fishes; but they fed five thousand men. So bring your lad's experience, your young offer of service, and God may use you to twice five thousand souls. That does not mean that you are to do it. But be in God's counsels, and He will teach you whether or no.

How are you to know this secret will of God? It is a great question. We cannot touch it now. Let this suffice. It can be known. It can be known to you. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. "I will guide thee with Mine eye." Unto the upright in heart He shall cause light to arise in darkness. This is not mysticism, no visionary's dream. It is not to drown the reason with enthusiasm's airy hope or supersede the word of God with fanaticism's blind caprice. No, it is not there. It is what Christ said, "The sheep hear his voice, and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them."

NUMBER XIV

The Relation of the Will of God to Sanctification

"*This is the will of God, even your sanctification.*"
1 THESS. iv. 3.

"*As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, 'Be ye holy, for I am holy.'*" — 1 PET. i. 15, 16.

"*Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. . . . By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*" — HEB. x. 9, 10.

OUR discussion of the will of God landed us two Sabbaths ago — perhaps in rather an unforeseen way — in the great subject of sanctification. You may remember that we then made this discovery, that the end of sanctification, in the sense of consecration, is to do the will of God, and that the proof was based on these words: "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, and be not conformed to this world." Why? "That ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." We are to present ourselves to God, not because it is a pleasant and luxurious thing to live in the state of consecration, but to do the

will of God. Or, to sum this up in a single sentence, it might read: "This is sanctification, even to prove the will of God."

But our text to-day is apparently the very opposite of this. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." Last day it looked as if sanctification was *in order to* the will of God; now it looks as if the will of God was in order to sanctification.

It is evident, therefore, that there is still something in this part of the subject which demands a clearance. And in order to gain this it will be necessary to present the other side of the same question, and complete the view of the subject of holiness itself.

There are in the Bible two great meanings to the word "sanctification." The first may be roughly called the Old Testament word. The second is identified, but not exclusively, with the New. The Old Testament meaning had this peculiarity, that it did not necessarily imply any inward change in the heart sanctified. In fact, it was not even necessarily applied to *hearts* at all, but to things. A field could be sanctified, a house could be sanctified, an altar, a tabernacle, gold and silver vessels, the garments of the priest, the cities of refuge. Anything, in short, that was set apart for sacred use was said to be *sanctified.* But the New Testament word had a deeper meaning. It meant not only outward consecration, but inward holiness. It meant an internal puri-

fication of the heart from all uncleanness, and an enduing it with the holy mind of Christ. It was not a mere separation like the first, but a *visitation* — a separation from the lower world, and a visitation from the higher, the coming in of God's Spirit from above with a principle of holiness that was to work an inward likeness to the character of God.

The practical object of the first process is mainly to put the thing in position where God can use it. A golden candlestick was sanctified, so that it might be of some use to God. A house was sanctified, so that it might be exclusively His — to do what He liked with. In like manner a man is consecrated — that God may use him. It is the process by which he is got into position for God. And all that sanctification does for him, in the first sense of the word, is so to put him in position that he shall always be within reach of God — that he shall do what God likes, *do*, that is to say, what God *wills*.

But there is something more in sanctification than man's merely being a tool in the hands of God. If there were not, *automatons* could do the work far better than men. They would never oppose God's will, and they would always be in position. But God's will has a reaction upon the instruments whom He employs. God's will does not stop with His will, as it were. It recoils back upon the person using it, and benefits him. If the instrument is a sanctified

cup, or a sanctified house, it does not recoil back, and make an internal change in them; but if it is a person who does God's will, God's will is not only done, but the person or doer is affected. God never keeps anything all to Himself. He who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, does He not with Him also freely give *us* all things? His Son is for us, His love is for us, His *will* is for us. How do we know that it is for us? Because this is the will of God, even *your* sanctification. Whatever else may be involved in it, this is in it; whatever else He may get from it, this is something which you get, *your* sanctification. "By the which will," as Hebrews says, "we are sanctified." "This is My will, not My gain, but yours; not My eternal advantage, but yours; not My holiness, but 'your sanctification.'" Do you think God wants your body when He asks you to present it to Him? Do you think it is for *His* sake that He asks it, that He might be enriched by it? God could make a thousand better with a breath. It is for *your* sake He asks it. He wants your gift to give you His gift — your gift which was just *in the way* of His gift. He wants your will out of the way, to make room for His will. You give everything to God. God gives it all back again, and more. You present your body a living sacrifice that you may prove God's will. You shall prove it by getting back your body — a glorified body. You lose the world that

you may prove God's will. God's will is that you shall gain heaven. This is the will of God, therefore, that you should gain heaven. Or this is the will of God that you should gain holiness, for holiness is heaven. Or this is the will of God, even your sanctification.

To sum up these facts, then, we find that they shape themselves into these two propositions:

1. That our sanctification, or, more strictly, our consecration, is in order to the will of God, "to prove what is that good and great and acceptable will of God."

2. That this reacts upon ourselves, a conspicuous part of God's will being that we should be personally holy. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification."

The first of these has already been discussed, and now the question comes to be how we can best fulfil this conspicuous part of the will of God and become holy ourselves. It is God's will for all of us that we should become holy. *How* are we to become holy?

We have probably asked this question many times already in our life. We have thought, and read, and prayed about it, and perhaps have never yet reached the conclusion *how* indeed we are to become holy. Perhaps the question has long ago assumed another and evasive form with us. "*When* are we going to become holy?" or perhaps a hopeless form, "How *ever* are we to become holy?"

Now the real way out of the difficulty is to ask a deeper question still: "*Why do I want* to be holy?" All the great difficulties of religion are centred round our motives. Impurities in a spiritual stream generally mean impurities at the spiritual source. And all fertility or barrenness of soul depend upon which source supplies the streams of the desires. Our difficulties about becoming holy, therefore, most likely lie in our reasons for *wanting* to become holy. For if you grant the true motive to holiness, you need no definition of holiness. True holiness lies touching the true motive. We shall get nearer the true roots of holiness, therefore, if we spend a little time over the root-question: "Why do I want to be holy?"

1. The first thing which started some of us to search for a better life, perhaps, was *Infection.* We caught an *infection* for a better life from some one we knew. We were idling our own way through life, when some one crossed our path — some one with high aims and great enthusiasms. We were taken with the principles on which that life was lived. Its noble purpose charmed us: its disregard of the petty troubles and cares of life astonished us. We felt unaccountably interested in it. There was a romance in its earnestness and self-denial that captivated us, and we thought we should like to take down our own life, and put it together again on this new plan. So we got our first motive to holiness.

Now this was not a wrong motive — it was only an imperfect one. It answered its purpose — so far. For God takes strange ways to *start* a man's religion. There is nothing more remarkable in the history of conversion, for instance, than the infinite diversity of answers to this question: "What made you first think about your soul?" God *does* take strange ways to start a man for heaven. The way home is sometimes shown him by an unexpected finger-post; and from a motive so unworthy that he dare not tell it in after-life, there comes to many a man his first impulses toward God. And long after he has begun to run the Christian race, God may try to hasten his lagging steps by the spur of a motive as far beneath an heir of heaven as his spiritual life is beneath what it ought to be.

But the principle to be noted through it all is this,— that the motives which God allows us to start on are not the ones we are to live on. It may be adversity in business that gives us a fresh start. It may be affliction, or ambition, or church-pride, or a thousand things. But the impulse cannot last, and it cannot carry us far. And there must come a time of exchange for a higher one if we would grow in grace, or move onward into a holier life. A man's motive must grow, if grace would grow. And many a man has to live on old grace, because he lives on an old motive. God let us begin with a lower one,

and then when He gave us more grace, it was that we might get a higher one; but we spent the grace on something else, and our motive is no higher than before. So, although we got a start in religion, we were little the better of it, and our whole life has stood still for want of a strong enough motive to go on.

2. But it was not necessary that we should have caught our infection from a *friend*. There is another great source of infection, and some of us are breathing its atmosphere every day — *books*. We may have got our motives to be good from *a book*.

We found in works on ethics, and in all great poets, and even perhaps in some novels, that the highest aim of life was to be true and pure and good. We found modern literature ringing with the praises of virtue. By-and-by we began to respect it, then to admire it, then to wish for it. Thus we caught the enthusiasm for purity which has changed our whole lives, *in a way*, and given us a chief motive to religion.

Well, we must thank God for having given us a start, *anyhow*. It is something to have begun. It is a great thing to have an enthusiasm to be true and pure and good. Nor will the Bible ever be jealous of any lesser book which God may use to stir men up to a better life. But all lesser books sin and come short. And the greatest motives of the greatest of the lesser books fall as far short of the glory of God as those who live

only on the enthusiasms which are kindled on the altar of modern literature fall short of the life and mind of Christ. God may give these motives to a man to start with. If he will not look into *God's book* for them, God may see fit to put something remotely like them into men's books. Jesus Christ used to come to men just where they were. There is no place on earth so dark that the light of heaven will not come to it; and there is no spot of earth where God may not choose to raise a monument of His love. There is always room anywhere in the world for a holy thought. It may come to a man on the roadside, as to Paul; or in the fork of a sycamore tree, as to Zacchæus. It may come to him at his boats, as to Peter; or at his Bible, as to the Eunuch. But, whether it come at the boats, or whether it come at the Bible, whatever is good is God's; and men may be thankful that the Giver of all good has peopled the whole earth and air and sky with thoughts of His glory, and filled the world with voices which call men near to Him. At the same time, it must be understood again that the initial motives are never meant to continue us far on the road to God. As a matter of fact, they never can continue us; and if a man does not get higher ones, his religion must, and his morality *may*, come to a bitter end. The melancholy proof occurs to every one in a moment, that those who inspire us with these almost Divine enthusiasms are, and have been, many

of them, degraded men and women themselves For if a man's motives to goodness are not higher than the enthusiasms of his own higher nature, the chances are that the appeals of his lower nature, in time, will either curb or degrade them.

The true motive to holiness, then, is *not* to be caught from books.

3. In the next place, some of us, perhaps, were induced to aim at a better life from *prudential* motives, or from *fear.*

We had read in the Bible a very startling sentence — "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Now we wished to see God. And we found the Bible full of commands to keep God's law. So, with fear and trembling, we began to try to keep it. Its strictness was a continual stimulus to us. We were kept watching and praying. We lived in an atmosphere of fear, lest we should break it. No doubt this has done good — great good. Like the others, it was not a bad motive — only an imperfect one. But, like the others, it will have to be exchanged for a higher one, if true progress in holy living is to be made.

4. Then some of us found another motive in *gratitude.* The great love of God in Christ had come home to us with a peculiar power. We felt the greatness of His sacrifice for us, of His forgiveness of us. And we would try to return His love. So we set our hearts with a gracious pur-

pose towards God. Our life and conversation would be becoming the Gospel of Christ. We would do for His sake what we would never do for our own sake. But even a noble impulse like this has failed to fulfil our heart's desire, and even our generosity has left us little nearer God.

5. And, lastly, there is this other thought which has sometimes helped us onward for a time — a feeling which comes over us at Communion times, at revival times, which Christian workers feel at all times: "Here are we surrounded by great privileges — singled out from the world for God's peculiar charge. God comes very close to us; the very ground is holy oftentimes. What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness? How different we ought to be from all the people around! How much more separate from every appearance of evil! How softly we should walk, who bear the vessels of the Lord!

Now some of these motives are very beautiful. They are the gifts of God. Doubtless many have attained to a certain measure of holiness by employing them. And they have at least awakened in us some longings after God. But they are all deficient, and hopelessly inadequate to carry on what sometimes they so hopefully begin.

And they are deficient in these three ways: —

1. They are unscriptural — rather, they do not convey the full scriptural truth.

2. They are inadequate to produce more than a small degree of holiness.

3. They never produce the true quality of holiness.

If we have not yet had higher motives than these, then, it follows that our spiritual life is being laid down upon principles which can never in the nature of things yield the results we had hoped and waited for.

We have been wondering why our growth in grace has been so small — so small, indeed, that sometimes it has almost seemed to cease. And without looking at books or doctrines, as we look into our hearts, we find one reason, at least, — perhaps the great one — that our *motive* is incomplete.

Now, the weakness of the old motive, apart from the error of it, consisted in this: in the first place it *wanted authority;* in the second, it proposed no *standard.* As regards the first, there was no reason why one should strive to be better. It was left to one's own discretion. Our friend said it, or our favourite author, and the obligation rose and fell with the nearness or remoteness of their influence. And as regards the *standard,* our friend or our favourite author's favourite hero was but a poor model at the best, for only a most imperfect spiritual beauty can ever be copied from anything made of clay.

Well, then, what is the right motive to holiness of life? We have been dealing with ordinary

motives hitherto; now we must come to extraordinary ones. Holiness is one of the most extraordinary things in life, and it demands the noblest motives, the noblest impulses, or none. Now we shall see how God has satisfied this demand of our nature for an extraordinary motive to this extraordinary thing, *holiness* — satisfied it so completely, that the soul, when it finds it out, need never feel unsatisfied again. God's motive to holiness is, "*Be ye holy, for I am holy.*"

It is a startling thing when the voice of God comes close to us and whispers, "Be ye holy;" but when the question returns from our lips, "Why should we be holy?" it is a more solemn thing to get this answer, "For I am holy." This is *God's* motive to holiness — "For I am holy." *Be ye holy:* here is its authority — its Divine obligation. *For I am holy*: here is its Divine motive.

Be ye holy. Think of the greatness of the obligation. Long ago, when we began the Christian life, we heard a voice, "Be ye holy." Perhaps, as we have seen, it was an infectious voice, the voice of a friend. Perhaps it was an inspiring voice, the voice of poetry and literature. Perhaps it was a warning voice, the voice of the law. But it was not a commanding voice — the voice of God. And the reason was, perhaps, that we were not thinking of the voice: we were thinking of the *holy*. We had caught sight of a new and beautiful object — something which seemed full of promise, which was to consecrate even the

common hours of our life. The religious world seemed bright to us then, and the books and the men were dear that would help us to reach out our hands to this. It was something new that had come into our life — this fascination of holiness. Had we been asked about the voice which said, "Be ye holy," we should indeed have said it was God's. But, in truth, it was only our own voice, which had caught some far-off echoes from our reading, or our thinking, or our friends. There was no *authority* in the voice, therefore, and it rested with our own poor wills whether we should grow in holiness or not. Sometimes our will was strong and true, and we were better men and women then than ever in our lives before; but there were intervals when we lost all we had gained, when we listened to another voice, "Be ye prosperous," or "Be ye happy," and then we lost all we had gained.

But with the Divine obligation before us, it is no longer optional that we should be holy. We *must* be holy. . . . And then see how the motive to holiness is attached to the obligation to holiness — the motive for holiness: "*For I am holy.*" The motive accounts for the obligation. God's one desire for the whole earth is that it should be holy — just because He is holy. And the best He can do with men is to make them like Himself. The whole earth is His, and he would have it all in harmony with Him. God has a right to demand that we should be holy — that every one should

be holy, and everything just, because He is holy Himself. To take even the lowest ground, we allow no ornaments in our house that are not lovely and pleasant to the eye. We have no business to cumber God's earth with ourselves if we are not holy — no business to live in the same world with Him. We are an offence to God — discordant notes in the music of the universe.

But God lays this high obligation upon us for our own sake. For this we were made. For this we were born in a Christian land. For this strange things have happened in our lives — strange pieces of discipline have disturbed its quiet flow, strange troubles, strange providences, strange chastenings. There is no other explanation of the mystery of our life than this, — that God would have us holy. At any cost God will have us holy. Whatever else we may be, this one thing we *must* be. This is the will of God, even your sanctification. It is not necessary that we should be prosperous or famous, or happy. But it is necessary that we should be holy; and the deepest moments of our life give us glimpses sometimes of a more tender reason still why God says, "Be ye holy" — *for our own sakes:* because it would be hell to be unholy.

There is now only one thing wanting in our new motive to holiness. We have discovered the sources of its obligation far up in the counsels of God, and deep down in the weakness of our own nature. We have found holiness to be an abso-

lutely necessary virtue — to live without which is to contradict our Maker. But we have not yet looked at its *quality*. The thing we are to pursue so ardently — what is it? How are we to shape it to ourselves when we think of it? Is there any plain definition of it — any form which could be easily stated and easily followed? It may be very easily stated. It is for those who have tried it to say whether it be easily followed. Be ye holy, *as* He is holy. *As* He is holy, as He who hath called you is holy, *so* be ye holy. This is the form of holiness we are asked to aim at. This is the standard. God's commentary on the motive "As He . . . so *ye*." Think for a moment the difference between these pronouns. *He* — *Ye*. He who hath called you — Jesus Christ. *He* who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. *He* who when He was reviled, reviled not again, when He suffered, He threatened not. *He* who was without spot or blemish, in whom even His enemies found no fault.

Ye, the fallen children of a fallen race. *Ye*, with hearts deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. *Ye* are to become as *He*. The two pronouns are to approach one another. The crucifiers are to work their way up to the crucified. *Ye* are to become as *He*. *There* is a motive as high as the holiness of God. It makes us feel as if we had our life-work before us still. It seems all to begin as yet. We have scarcely begun even to be like God — for we began perhaps with no

higher motive than to be like some one else — not like God at all. But the little betterness that we get from books; the chance impulses that come from their other lives have never fulfilled in us the will of God — have never sanctified their hearts as ours — could never sanctify such hearts — make *ye* become as *He.*

No doubt a great deal of human good is possible to man before he touch the character of Christ. High human motives and human aims may make a noble human life. But they never make a *holy* life. A holy life is a life like Christ's. And, whatever may be got from the lower motives to a better life, one thing must necessarily be absent from them all — the life like Christ's, or rather, the spirit like Christ's. For the life like Christ's can only come from Christ; and the spirit of Christ can only be caught from Christ.

Hence, therefore (in closing), we come at last to the profound meaning of another text which stands alone in the Word of God and forms the only true climax to such a subject as this.

"Lo I come to do Thy will, O God," the author of the Hebrews quotes from David, and goes on to add, "*By the which will we are sanctified.*" Christ came to do God's will, by the which will we are sanctified. This is the will of God, even your sanctification. But the writer of the Hebrews adds another lesson: "By the which will we are sanctified." How? "Through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Our sanctifi-

cation is not in books, or in noble enthusiasm, or in personal struggles after a better life. It is in the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Justification is through the *blood* of Jesus Christ once for all. Sanctification is through the *body* of Jesus Christ once for all. It is not a thing to be generated, but to be received. It is not to be generated in fragments of experience at one time and another — it is already complete in Christ. We have only to put on Christ. And though it may take a lifetime of experience to make it ours, the sanctification, *whenever* it come, can *only* come from Christ, and if we ever *have* sanctification it will only be because, and inasmuch as we have Christ. Our sanctification is not what morality gives, not even what the Bible gives, not even what Christ gives, — it is what Christ *lives*. It is Christ Himself.

The reason why we resort so much to lower impulses to a Christian life is imperfect union to Christ. We take our *doctrines* from the Bible and our *assurance* from Christ. But for want of the living bright reality of His presence in our hearts we search the world all round for impulses. We search religious books for impulses, and tracts and sermons, but in vain. They are not there. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. Christ is all and in all. The beginning of all things is in the will of God — "by the which will." The end of all things is in sanctification through faith in Jesus Christ. "By

the which will ye are sanctified." Between these two poles all spiritual life and Christian experience run. And no motive outside Christ can lead a man *to* Christ. If your motive to holiness is not as high as Christ it cannot make you rise to Christ. For water cannot rise above its level. "Beware, therefore, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after *Christ.* For *in Him* dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete *in Him*, which is the head of *all* principality and power" (2 Col. viii. 10). "Who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and *sanctification*, and redemption" (1 Cor. i. 30). ("*As* ye have therefore received the Lord Jesus, *so* walk ye *in Him.*")

NUMBER XV

How to Know the Will of God

"*If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.*" — JOHN vii. 17.

THERE is an experience which becomes more and more familiar to every one who is trying to follow Christ — a feeling of the growing loneliness of his Christian life. It comes from a sense of the peculiarly personal interest which Christ takes in him, which sometimes seems so strong as almost to make him feel that his life is being detached from all the other lives around him, that it is being drawn out of the crowd of humanity as if an unseen arm linked in his were taking him aside for a nearer intimacy and a deeper and more private fellowship. It is not, indeed, that the great family of God are to be left in the shade for him, or that he is in any way the favourite of heaven; but the sanctifying and, in the truest sense, humbling realization that God makes Himself as real to each poor unit as if he were the whole; so that even as in coming to Christ at first he felt himself the only lost, so now

in staying with Christ he feels himself the only found. And it is, perhaps, true that without any loss in the feeling of saintly communion with all those throughout the world who say "Our Father" with him in their prayers, the more he feels that Christ has all of him to Himself the more he feels that he has Christ all to himself. Christ has died for other men, but in a peculiar sense for him. God has a love for all the world, but a peculiar love for him. God has an interest in all the world, but a peculiar interest in him. This is always the instinct of a near fellowship, and it is true of the universal fellowship of God with His own people.

But if there is one thing more than another which is more personal to the Christian — more singularly his than God's love or God's interest — one thing which is a finer symbol of God's love and interest, it is the knowledge of God's will — the private knowledge of God's will. And it is more personal, just inasmuch as it is more private. My private portion of God's love is only a private *share* in God's love — only a part — the same in quality and kind as all the rest of God's love, as all the others get from God. But God's will is a thing for myself. There is a will of God for me which is willed for no one else besides. It is not a *share* in the universal will, in the same sense as I have a share in the universal love. It is a particular will for me, different from the will He has for

any one else — a private will — a will which no one else knows about, which no one can know about, but me.

To be sure, as we have seen before, God had likewise a universal will for me and every man. But this is more than that. In the Ten Commandments, in conscience, in the beatitudes of Christ, God tells all the world His will. There is no secret about this part, it is as universal as His love. It is the will on which the character of every man is to be formed and conformed to God's.

But there is a will for career as well as for character. There is a will for *where* — in what place, viz., in this town or another town — I am to become like God as well as *that* I am to become like God. There is a will for where I am to be, and what I am to be, and what I am to do to-morrow. There is a will for what scheme I am to take up, and what work I am to do for Christ, and what business arrangements to make, and what money to give away. This is God's private will for me, for every step I take, for the path of life along which He points my way, — God's will for my *career*.

If I have God's will in my character, my life may become great and good. It may be useful and honourable, and even a monument of the sanctifying power of God. But it will only be a *life*. However great and pure it be, it can be no more than a life. And it ought to be a

mission. There should be no such thing as a Christian life, each life should be a *mission.*

God has a life-plan for every human life. In the eternal counsels of His will, when He arranged the destiny of every star, and every sand-grain and grass-blade, and each of those tiny insects which live but for an hour, the Creator had a thought for you and me. Our life was to be the slow unfolding of this thought, as the corn-stalk from the corn, or the flower from the gradually opening bud. It was a thought of what we were to be, of what we might become, of what *He* would have us do with our days and years, or influence with our lives. But we all had the terrible power to evade this thought, and shape our lives from another thought, from another will, if we chose. The bud could only become a flower, and the star revolve in the orbit God had fixed. But it was man's prerogative to choose his path, his duty to choose it in God. But the Divine right to choose at all has always seemed more to him than his duty to choose in God, so, for the most part, he has taken his life *from God,* and cut his career from himself.

It comes to pass, therefore, that there are two great classes of people in the Christian world to-day. (1) Those who have God's will in their character; (2) Those who have God's will likewise in their career. The first are in the world to live. They have a *life.* The second are in the world to minister. They have a *mission.*

Now those who belong to the first class, those who are simply living in the world and growing character, however finely they may be developing their character, cannot understand too plainly that they are not fulfilling God's will. They are really outside a great part of God's will altogether. They understand the universal part, they are moulded by it, and their lives as *lives* are in some sense noble and true. But they miss the private part, the secret whispering of God in the ear, the constant message from earth to heaven. "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" They never have the secret joy of asking a question like this, the wonderful sense in asking it, of being in the counsels of God, the overpowering thought that God has taken notice of you, and your question — that He will let you do something, something peculiar, personal, private, which no one else has been given to do — this which gives life for God its true sublimity, and makes a perpetual sacrament of all its common things. Life to them is at the best a bare and selfish thing, for the truest springs of action are never moved at all, and the strangest thing in human history, the bounding of the career from step to step, from circumstance to circumstance, from tragedy to tragedy, is unexplained and unrelated, and hangs, a perpetual mystery, over life.

The great reason possibly why so few have thought of taking God into their career is that so few have really taken God into their *life*. No

one ever thinks of having God in his career, or need think, until his life is fully moulded into God's. And no one will succeed in knowing even what God in his career can mean till he know what it is to have God in the secret chambers of his heart. It requires a well-kept life to know the will of God, and none but the Christlike in character can know the Christlike in career.

It has happened, therefore, that the very fact of God's guidance in the individual life has been denied. It is said to give life an importance quite foreign to the Divine intention in making man. One life, it is argued, is of no more importance than any other life, and to talk of special providences happening every hour of every day is to detract from the majesty and dignity of God, that, in fact, it reduces a religious life to a mere religious caprice, and the thought that God's will is being done to a hallucination of the mind.

And there is another side to the objection, which though less pronounced and definite, subtly dangerous still — that there does indeed seem to be some warrant in Scripture for getting to know the will of God; but that, in the first place, *that* probably means only on great occasions which come once or twice in a lifetime; and, in the second, that the whole subject is so obscure that, all things considered, a man had better walk by his own common sense, and leave such mysteries alone.

But the Christian cannot allow the question to

be put off with poor evasions like these. Every day, indeed, and many times a day, the question rises in a hundred practical forms. "What is the will of God for me?" What is the will of God for me to-day, just now, for the next step, for this arrangement and for that, and this amusement, and this projected work for Christ? For all these he feels he must consult the will of God, and that God has a will for him in all such things, and that it must be possible *somehow* to know what that will is, is not only a matter of hope, but a point in his doctrine and creed.

But in order to vindicate the *reasonableness* of such expectations as these, it may simply be affirmed as a matter of fact that there *are* a number of instruments for finding out the will of God. One of them is a very great instrument, so far surpassing all the rest in accuracy that there may be said to be but one which has never been known to fail. The others are smaller and clumsier, much less delicate, indeed, and often fail. They often fail to come within sight of the will of God at all, and are so far astray at other times as to mistake some other thing for it. Still they are instruments, and notwithstanding their defects, have a value by themselves, and when the greater instrument employs their humbler powers to second its attempts, immediately become as keen and as unerring as itself.

The most important of these minor instruments is Reason, and although it is a minor instrument,

it is great enough in many a case to reveal the secret will of God. God is taking your life and character through a certain process, for example. He is running your career along a certain chain of events. And sometimes the light which He is showing you stops, and you have to pick your way for a few steps by the dimmer light of thought. But it is God's will for you then to use this thought, and to elevate it through regions of consecration, into faith, and to walk by this light till the clearer beam from His will comes back again.

Another of these instruments is *experience.* There are many paths in life which we all tread more than once. God's light was by us when we walked them first, and lit a beacon here and there along the way. But the next time He sent our lines along that path He knew the side-lights should be burning still, and let us walk alone.

And then there is circumstance. God closes things in around us till our alternatives are all reduced to one. That one, if we must act, is probably the will of God just then.

And then there is the advice of others — an important element at least — and the welfare of others, and the example to others, and the many other facts and principles which make up the moral man, which, if not strong enough always to discover what God's will is, are not too feeble oftentimes to determine what it is *not.*

Even the best of these instruments, however, has but little power in its own hands. The ultimate appeal is always to the one great Instrument, which uses them in turn as it requires, and which supplements their discoveries, or even supplants them if it choose by its own superior light, and might, and right. It is like some great glass that can sweep the skies in the darkest night, and trace the motions of the furthest stars, while all the rest can but see a faint uncertain light piercing for a moment here and there the clouds which lie between.

And this great instrument for finding out God's will, this instrument which can penetrate where reason cannot go, where observation has not been before, and memory is helpless, and the guiding hand of circumstance has failed, has a name which is seldom associated with any end so great, a name which every child may understand, even as the stupendous instrument itself with all its mighty powers is sometimes moved by infant hands when others have tried in vain.

The name of the instrument is *obedience*. Obedience, as it is sometimes expressed, is the organ of spiritual knowledge. As the eye is the organ of physical sight; the mind, of intellectual sight; so the organ of spiritual vision is this strange power, obedience.

This is one of the great discoveries the Bible has made to the world. It is purely a Bible thought. Philosophy never conceived a truth so

simple and yet so sublime. And, although it was known in Old Testament times, and expressed in Old Testament books, it was reserved for Jesus Christ to make the full discovery to the world, and add to His teaching another of the profoundest truths which have come from heaven to earth — that the mysteries of the Father's will are hid in this word "obey."

The circumstances in which Christ made the great discovery to the world are known to every one.

The Feast of Tabernacles was in progress in Jerusalem when Jesus entered the temple to teach. A circle of Jews were gathered round Him who seem to have been spell-bound with the extraordinary wisdom of His words. He made no pretension to be a scholar. He was no graduate of the Rabbinical schools. He had no access to the sacred literature of the people. Yet here was this stranger from Nazareth confounding the wisest heads in Jerusalem, and unfolding with calm and effortless skill such truths as even these temple walls had never heard before. Then "the Jews marvelled, saying, 'How knoweth this man letters, never having learned?'" What organ of spiritual knowledge can He have, never having learned? *Never having learned* — they did not know that Christ *had* learned. They did not know the school at Nazareth whose teacher was in heaven — whose schoolroom was a carpenter's shop — the lesson, the Father's will.

They knew not that hidden truths could come from God, or wisdom from above.

What came to them was gathered from human books, or caught from human lips. They knew no organ save the mind; no instrument of knowing the things of heaven but that by which they *learned* in the schools. But Jesus pointed to a spiritual world which lay still far beyond, and tells them of the spiritual eye which reads its profounder secrets and reveals the mysteries of God. "My doctrine is not Mine," He says, "but His that sent Me"; and "My judgment is just," as He taught before, "because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me." And then, lest men should think this great experience was never meant for them, He applies His principles to every human mind which seeks to know God's will. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."

The word doctrine here is not to be taken in our sense of the word doctrine. It is not the doctrine of theology. "Any man" is to know if he will do His will. But it is God's teaching — God's mind. If any man will do His will, he shall know God's mind; he shall know God's teaching and God's will.

In this sense, or indeed in the literal sense, from the first look at these words it appears almost as if a contradiction were involved. To *know* God's will, it is as much as to say, *Do* God's

will. But how are we to *do* God's will *until* we know it? To *know* it; that is the very dilemma we are in. And it seems no way out of it to say, *Do* it and you shall *know* it. We want to know it, in order to do it; and now we are told to do it, in order to know it! If any man *do*, he shall *know*.

But that is not the meaning of the words. That is not even the words themselves. It is not, If any man *do*, he shall know; but if any man *will* do. And the whole sense of the passage turns upon that word *will*. It means, "If any man *is willing* to do, he shall know." He does not need to *do* His will in order to know, he only need be willing to do it. For "will" is not at all the sign of the future tense as it looks. It is not connected with the word *do* at all, but a separate verb altogether, meaning "is willing," or "wills." If any man wills, or if any man is willing, to do, he shall know.

Now notice the difference this makes in the problem. Before, it looked as if the doing were to come first and then the knowing His will; but now another element is thrown in at the very beginning. The being willing comes first and then the knowing; and thereafter the doing may follow — the doing, that is to say, if the will has been sufficiently clear to proceed.

The whole stress of the passage therefore turns on this word will. And Christ's answer to the question, How to know the will of God? may be

simply stated thus: "If any man is willing to do God's will he shall know," or, in plainer language still, "If any man is sincerely *trying* to do God's will, he shall know."

The connection of all this with obedience is just that being willing is the highest form of obedience. It is the spirit and essence of obedience. There is an obedience in the world which is no obedience, because the *act* of obedience is there, but the spirit of submission is not.

"A certain man," we read in the Bible, "had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, 'Son, go work to-day in my vineyard.' He answered, '*I will not*': but afterward he repented and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered, 'I go, sir': and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father?" Obedience here comes out in its true colours as a thing in the will. And if any man have an obeying will, a truly single and submissive will, he shall know of the teaching, or of the leading, whether it be of God.

If we were to carry out this principle into a practical case, it might be found to work in some such way as this. To-morrow, let us say, there is some difficulty before us in our path. It lies across the very threshold of our life, and we cannot begin the working week without, at least, some notice that it is there. It may be some trifling item of business life, over which unaccountable suspicions have begun to gather of

late, and force themselves in spite of everything into thought and conscience, and even into prayer. Or, it may be, some change of circumstance is opening up, and alternatives appearing, and demanding choice of one. Perhaps it is some practice in our life, which the clearing of the spiritual atmosphere and increasing light from God is hinting to be wrong, while reason cannot coincide exactly and condemn. At all events there is something on the mind — something to do, to suffer, to renounce — and these are alternative on the mind to distinguish, to choose from, to reject. Suppose, indeed, we made this case a personal as well as an illustrative thing, and in view of the solemn ordinance to which we are shortly called, we ran the lines of our self-examination along it as we proceed — the question rises, How are we to separate God's light on the point from our own, disentangle our thoughts on the point from His, and be sure we are following His will, not the reflected image of ours?

The first process towards this discovery *naturally* would be one of outlook. *Naturally* we would set to work by collecting all the possible materials for decision from every point of the compass, balancing the one consequence against the other, then summing up the points in favour of each by itself, until we chose the one which emerged at last with most of reason on its side. But this would only be the natural man's way out of the dilemma. The spiritual man would go about it

in another way. This way, he would argue, has no religion in it at all, except perhaps the acknowledgment that reason is divine; and though it might be quite possible and even probable that the light should come to him through the medium of reason, yet he would reach his conclusion, and likely enough a different conclusion, quite from another side.

And his conclusion would likewise be a better and sounder conclusion, for the insight of the non-religious method would be impaired, and the real organ of knowing God's will so out of order from disuse, that even reason would be biassed in its choice. A heart not quite subdued to God is an imperfect element, in which His will can never live; and the intellect which belongs to such a heart is an imperfect instrument and cannot find God's will unerringly — for God's will is found in regions which obedience only can explore.

Accordingly, he would go to work from the opposite side from the first. He would begin not in out-look, but in in-look. He would not give his mind to observation. He would devote his soul to self-examination, to self-examination of the most solemn and searching kind. For this principle of Christ is no concession to an easy life, or a careless method of rounding a difficult point. It is a summons rather to learn the highest and most sacred thing in Heaven, by bracing the heart to the loftiest and severest sacrifice on earth — the bending of an unwilling human will till it

breaks in the will of God. It means that the heart must be watched with a jealous care, and most solemnly kept for God. It means that the hidden desires must be taken out one by one and regenerated by Christ — that the faintest inclination of the soul when touched by the spirit of God, be prepared to assume the strength of will and act at any cost. It means that nothing in life should be dreaded so much as that the soul should ever lose its sensitiveness to God; that God should ever speak and find the ear just dull enough to miss what He has said; that God should have some active will for some human will to do, and our heart not the first in the world to be ready to obey.

When we have attained to this by meditation, by self-examination, by commemoration, and by the Holy Spirit's power, we may be ready to make it our daily prayer, that we may know God's will; and when the heart is prepared like this, and the wayward will is drilled in sacrifice and patience to surrender all to God, God's will may come out in our career at every turning of our life, and be ours not only in sacramental aspiration but in act.

To search for God's will with *such* an instrument is scarce to search at all. God's will lies transparently in view at every winding of the path; and if perplexity sometimes comes, in such way as has been supposed the mind will gather the phenomena into the field of vision, as carefully, as fully, as laboriously, as if no light would

come at all, and then stand still and wait till the wonderful discerning faculty of the soul, that eye which beams in the undivided heart and looks right out to God from every willing mind fixes its gaze on one far distant spot, one spot perhaps which is dark to all the world besides, where all the lights are focussed in God's will.

How this finite and this infinite are brought to touch, *how* this invisible will of God is brought to the temporal heart must even remain unknown. The mysterious meeting-place in the prepared and willing heart between the human and divine — where, precisely, the will is finally moved into line with God's — of these things knoweth no man save only the Spirit of God.

The wind bloweth where it listeth. "We hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth." When every passion is annihilated, and no thought moves in the mind, and all the faculties are still and waiting for God, the spiritual eye may trace, perhaps, some delicate motion in the soul, some thought which stirs like a leaf in the unseen air and tells that *God* is there. It is not the stillness, nor the unseen breath, nor the thought that only *stirred*, but these three mysteries in one which reveal God's will to me. God's light it is true does not supersede, but illuminate our thoughts. Only when God sends an angel to trouble the pool let us have faith for the angel's hand, and believe that some power of Heaven has stirred the waters in our soul.

Let us but get our hearts in position for knowing the will of God — only, let us be willing to know God's will in our hearts that we may *do* God's will in our lives, and we shall raise no questions as to how this will may come and feel no fears in case the heavenly light should go.

But let it be remembered, as already said, that it requires a well-kept life to will to do this will. It requires a well-kept life to *do* the will of God, and even a *better* kept life to *will* to do His will. To be *willing* is a rarer grace than to be *doing* the will of God. For he who is *willing* may sometimes have nothing to *do*, and must only be *willing* to *wait:* and it is easier far to be *doing* God's will than to be *willing* to have *nothing to do* — it is easier far to be *working* for Christ than it is to be willing to *cease*. No, there is nothing rarer in the world to-day than the truly willing soul, and there is nothing more worth coveting than the will to will God's will. There is no grander possession for any Christian life than the transparently simple mechanism of a sincerely obeying heart. And if we could keep the machinery clear, there would be lives in thousands doing God's will on earth even as it is done in Heaven. There would be God in many a man's career whose soul is allowed to drift — a useless thing to God and the world — with every changing wind of life, and many a noble Christian character rescued from wasting all its virtues on itself and saved for work for Christ.

And when the time of trial would come, and all in earth and heaven was dark and even God's love seemed dim: what is there ever left to cling to but this will of the willing heart, a God-given, God-ward bending will, which says amidst the most solemn and perplexing vicissitudes of life,

> "Father, I know that all my life,
> Is portioned out by Thee,
> And the changes that are sure to come
> I do not fear to see:
> But I ask Thee for a present mind,
> Intent on pleasing Thee."